

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

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SFR INTERVIEWS

LESTER DEL REY alan burt akers

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ALIEN THOUGHTS

By the Editor



It is called the second industrial revolution by its enthusiasts. It is snowballing in the R&D departments of major corporations. It promises to change profoundly our lives in the next twenty years.

What is it?

It is the microprocessor, or computer-on-a-chip, a tiny slice of silicon which has memory and logic abilities. It is being used to make:

Smart watches---they'll remind you of important dates as they come around.

Smart scales---they know all the postage rates and zips and give the exact postage for the right destination and class of service.

And so on...In a year or so you'll be offered smart refrigerators (perhaps it will tell you when certain foods have been in it too long for safety, when it's temperature is too low, or high...), smart cars (automatic driving---you "drive" by punching a Max Speed button, a Turn Left button, a Slow button, a Lane Change-Right button, a Park button---as your car reads a special magnetic paint strip on the streets and monitors other cars nearby with eyes that judge relative speeds and sizes); smart voice-typers (that can be programmed to your individual speaking style, accent, and voice, with a memory for correct spelling and a logic facility to keep same-sounding words in their places) and so on.

I'm positive IBM is working on these and more...as is every large manufacturing corporation. In the Upper Levels of business today, you stay alert and change with advancing technology, or you're suddenly losing markets and overnight (three or four years) facing bankruptcy.

You'll see smart homes, smart TV, smart coffee-makers (load them once a month with instant, turn on the water...), smart books (which

will answer questions and probably question your intelligence), and above all, smart tools which will create another, more basic problem with unemployment and the mechanics ethics and philosophy of redistribution of wealth and power. Factories will really be automated, in the not too distant future, saving vast sums on labor, but using increasingly costly materials.

The surface is just being scratched now.

I'm waiting for the time (probably beyond my time) when a vast computer network will permit a citizen to read the latest issue of SFR on his home screen at a reasonable cost. His credit account will be debited and my account credited instantly for the transaction. No more distributor woes, no more postage woes, no more printing woes... Just create the master copy, feed it into the central computer memory...

Of course, there would have to be a limit to the titles available, and a print-out service would be available, I suppose, for permanent reference...The problems would have to be worked out.

This is a nice dream, isn't it? And it might even save a lot of energy---a LOT of energy---as an electronic image is a good deal cheaper than the cost of making paper, printing it, handling it, mailing it, handling it, handling it...Once the computers and terminals are in place...

It might actually be true that we could do more with less. I hope so. I get very tired of stuffing and addressing envelopes.

This has been an exercise in Optimism.

IBM finally delivered the new Selectric, and as you plainly see, it was used to type the text for

this issue. I noted on the type styles folder I consulted that Delegate is a narrow Pica type-face, and thought it would work at Elite spacing. And so it does; what we get here is a Pica size with Elite wordage count, and more professional look to the text.

My hope is that it'll be easier to read and give a more pleasing impression overall.

I'm using the large Orator type for headings, and Adjutant (an Elite version of Delegate) for quotations of length and for all small-print purposes. It makes for a bit of variety.

The Elite Italic is for my comments in and after letters and sometimes articles, columns... whenever I feel the need to disagree with somebody.

I'll be interested in any comments you readers care to make on these styles and applications. For instance, would you mind a bit more reduction in order to get more words per issue? There is a point of reduction in print size where the eye rebels and the brain decides reading is too much work. This point is somewhere around 9 point type size.

I think Ted White and Sol Cohen are flirting with disaster by using 9 point type in order to get more material into the magazines. Contrast that with F&SF and ANALOG which use 10 point. You may think the difference is trifling, but reading dynamics are very subtle, and the effect can be profound. Very important, too, is the boldness of the type and the space between the lines.

A line of type is easier to read if it has room to breathe; elite type at six lines per inch can often be as easy to read as the larger pica at six lines per inch, because the pica lines tend to appear crowded. That "crowded" effect is my worry in using this Delegate at this reduction. Reducing it even more would crowd the lines even more.

These are the factors editors and publishers weigh when deciding type styles and sizes for books and magazines. They are important, and the success or failure of a publication can depend on them.

I was going to write a series of interruptions, interjections and intrusions in Terrence Green's Malzberg article in this issue, and told him so when I accepted the piece,

Formerly THE ALIEN CRITIC

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INTERIOR ART CREDITS ON P.24

because while I agree with his comments and evaluations about Barry's writing and meanings, I disagree strongly on his apparent assumptions about fiction and science fiction especially.

But then I had second thoughts. Unfair to Terry to take pot shots in his territory, so to speak. His flow would be interrupted. Editorial irresponsibility.

So I'm about to engage his assumptions in combat here, in my territory.

But first, I urge you to read his and Barry Malzberg's articles, so you'll know what I'm huffing and puffing about. I'll wait.

Okay?

I object to the assumption that science fiction should address itself to the "real" problems of people, should concern itself with the inner turmoils of man...and that the traditional "wonder" ingredients of sf (the basics of sf's primary appeal, for Christ's sake!) are irrelevant and should be phased out or ignored.

AND I object to the "whore" equation. It boils down to the sensitive writer objecting to having to take orders, to being a workman and not a free soul and an artist. It's image and status at stake. It's ego.

This argument that fiction should delve into the soul of mankind...illuminate his emotional hangups...and forget diversion and distraction---rub the readers' noses in the fucking shit of life---is a bunch of arrogant, elitist shit itself. It presumes the writers are competent to teach all of us in these matters, and it assumes that non-fiction doesn't exist. Nobody else writes books or publishes magazines dealing with psychology, morality, sociology, culture, economics, politics, etc. etc., right? Only certain writers of fiction have this information and these insights.

And it follows (to hear them speak in unconscious assumptions) that only they are available to instruct and enlighten via FICTION!

But fiction's role, I believe, is not the salvation of mankind and the changing of society. It is precisely what Literary and Artistic writers deplore and dread: storytelling that primarily entertains, distracts, diverts. A good writer uses his intelligence and knowledge and talent to make his story more entertaining, more engrossing, more diverting.

WHY DO READERS BUY FICTION?

Because they want stories that will fill their minds with other lives, other places, other doings. They do not want (in general) to be written down to, patronized, called names, teased, confused, sneered at, derided, accused, or used as involuntary audiences for ego-tripping writers whose styles and techniques shout LOOK AT ME! I'M WRITING THIS STORY! AREN'T I CLEVER? AREN'T I A DEEP THINKER? AREN'T I A GREAT STYLIST? THINK ABOUT ME, NOT THE STORY! I'M MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE STORY!

Fuck that noise. I won't pay money or time for that!

Why should science fiction deal with black holes, other planets, space travel, aliens, time travel, etc. etc. etc.?

Because there are a lot of people willing to pay money to read fiction (not fact books and speculative articles) about those things. They want truth and insights and knowledge in these stories, but subservient to the story!

Well, most of you have read this kind of diatribe from me before. Every few issues I feel this need to vent my spleen on this matter. Terrence Green will feel abused because he merely expressed the viewpoints I object to, and doesn't necessarily hold those assumptions to his own bosom.

And Barry has had this blast from me before, with no damage to himself, and with continuing friendship. Lesser men, and lesser writers, have refused to communicate and have excommunicated SFR because of some of my comments.

So it goes.

THE RICHARD E. GEIS ANNEX

For those who be-moaned my ceasing publication of my personalzine, RICHARD E. GEIS after the third issue a few years ago, and who enjoy my few columns of personal and political and economic commentary in TAC and now SFR, here is your measure of REG (and my indulgence in same).

A very good woman is sharing my home now. We get along remarkably well. She is from a farm upbringing in the middle-west and has known Hard Times. She shares my feeling that waste is immoral in every sense, and that a goodly garden is a virtue. A wood

stove is not an assault on her status or pride.

Last winter I had a small "tin can" wood stove in the basement offices (formerly the Partyrooms when the house was built) with the pipe running up into the basement fireplace. It heated that half of the basement very well. A single Pres-to-Log axed into halves kept the rooms often too warm for up to 3 hours.

When my companion moved in early this Spring I switched back to using oil heat since we were spending so much time upstairs. But I also decided to try a "fancy" way to use wood heating and still have a middle-class livingroom; I bought a fireplace heat extractor. Basically a fan blows cool floor-level air into a series of pipes in the fireplace, the air is heated by the fire, and is blown out of extended pipe outlets into the livingroom.

But I still resented the waste of all that heat going up the flue. So I brought the "tin can" up and installed it in the fireplace cavity and ran the pipe into the flue (masking off the rest of the flue with sheet metal, as in the basement). I set up the heat extractor pipes close to the stove and angled other air-blower pipes to push the hot air in the top of the fireplace out into the room.

Clever? Did it work as I had hoped?

No. Too much fire-heated air still went up the chimney, and the contained fire didn't heat the pipes enough...and the fan was too obtrusive and loud.



So. I am going to the system that worked in the basement---the stove on its platform of bricks extended out into the room about three feet, giving the hot air and smoke a length of stove pipe to travel to the flue. The stove pipe radiates almost as much heat as the stove itself. Greater efficiency.

The stove doesn't fit the current "nice" middle class decor left from mother's ownership of this house. We slowly are altering it to a more informal, "homey" atmosphere. The stove will not stick out like a sore thumb.

The economics are interesting. Oil heat costs me about \$240. per year at current oil prices. A \$56.50 load of 250 Presto-Logs will I estimate heat the livingroom, diningroom, kitchen---the upstairs rooms---for the winter months easily. (I only used 125 or so last winter to heat the two basement rooms which are as large as the livingroom and diningroom, and even then I often left the stairway door stand open to drain off excess heat to the cooler street floor.)

Add the fact that I will be making storm windows for huge livingroom and diningroom windows (which must radiate heat like crazy in cold weather) and even further savings are likely.

Added note: I've lined the stove with one-inch fire brick inside, which adds more protection and even-heating capabilities to the stove. I will as usual use screws to lock the pipe elbows and straight sections together and to the flue. That stove will be safe.

I have two new dwarf fruit trees, giving us now two pear trees, one peach, one apple, and one apricot. We have tomatoes, cucumbers, corn, peas, beans, strawberries, carrots, onions, cantaloups, and cabbages growing in the gardens which ring the backyard. I learn more and more each week about gardening. I love it.

No room here for political and economic comment. I'll continue this REG Section to "Alien Conclusions", page 45.

THOMAS BURNETT SWANN 1928 - 1976

Thomas Burnett Swann, author of Day of the Minotaur and other classic fantasies, died May 5 of cancer at his parents' home in Winter Haven, Florida. He was 47 years old

Swann was born October 12, 1928, in Florida. He was fascinated as a child by the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs and, later, Planet Stories and Weird Tales. Oddly, however, these early loves did not influence his later fiction to a noticeable degree.

He attended Duke University and the University of Tennessee, and he received his doctorate from the University of Florida. He taught English literature for several years at Wesleyan College in Georgia and Florida Atlantic University, but he gave up his academic career in the early sixties in favor of full-time writing.

Swann's first published work was poetry, beginning in the early fifties while he was in the Navy; four collections of his verse were published. He also wrote several critical and biographical studies on such literary figures as A.A. Milne, Ernest Dowson, and Christina Rossetti.

In 1958 Swann's first fantasy, "Winged Victory," was published in Fantastic Universe, although he did not begin to sell regularly until the 1960s when the British Science Fantasy under the editorship of Ted Carnell became his main market. His first novel, Day of the Minotaur, was published by Donald Wollheim at Ace Books in 1966 to a favorable reception and a Hugo nomination. Ace subsequently published several more of his books, including The Weirwoods (1967), Moonduist (1968), and The Dolphin and the Deep (1968), which contained the classic medieval fantasy, "The Manor of Roses." Which was also a Hugo nominee following its initial appearance in F&SF.

In 1973 Swann won the Phoenix Award at the DeepSouthCon in New Orleans for his novel Wolfwinter (Ballantine, 1972).

Swann's first bout with cancer came four years ago, although at the time doctors felt that the disease had been overcome. From that experience came How Are the Mighty Fallen (DAW, 1974), a Biblical fantasy based on the story of David

and Jonathan. Critical reaction was favorable, and Theodore Sturgeon, writing in the New York Times, said, "He writes blissfully and beautifully separated from trend and fashion; he writes his own golden thing his own way. ... I can see his works capturing some youngster today as the timeless beauty of William Morris enchanted me too many years ago."

Swann never married, and in a recent interview he said, "Some people, I think, are not meant to marry. They are meant to write. To be a writer, you have to be alone a great deal. My one and only engagement was a disaster. She was jealous of my writing. With me, it was either writing or the woman, and I chose the former. Somebody had to go and she went."

Ironically, 1976 will see publication of more of Swann's work than during any other year. The Minikins of Yam, a fantasy with an Egyptian setting, was published by DAW in March; Lady of the Bees, a novel-length version of "Where is the Bird of Fire?" was issued by Ace in May, although Swann never saw the finished book; Tournament of Thorns, an expanded version of "The Manor of Roses," will be published by Ace in July; The Gods Abide, in which Swann linked his two favorite locales, the Mediterranean and ancient Britain, will appear from DAW in November; a still-untitled novel, a "prequel" to Day of the Minotaur and The Forest of Forever, will be published as a serial in Fantastic; and finally Swann's version of the story of Dido and Aeneas, Queens Walk in the Dusk, which he finished from his hospital bed, will see print this summer from publisher Richard Harrison as a deluxe hardcover edition illustrated by Jeff Jones.

Besides appearing in England, Swann's work has also been translated into French, Dutch, and Norwegian.

In the introduction to a French edition of one of his books was written: "Instead of the macrocosm he prefers the microcosm; to an alien planet, an isolated forest; to grizzlies, teddy bears." This I think, aptly characterizes the view point of Swann's fiction. His was a gentle world, peopled by minotaurs, dryads, fauns, and other prehumans who often found themselves in reluctant conflict with the encroaching civilization. There was no question as to where the author's sympathies were.

-- Bob Roehm

AN INTERVIEW WITH LESTER DEL REY

CONDUCTED BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

SFR: As a critic for one of the major magazines---

DEL REY: Are you a critic or am I?

SFR: You.

DEL REY: I am not a critic. I am a reviewer.

SFR: Okay, then, as a reviewer for one of the major SF magazines, what do you consider the job of such a person to be?

DEL REY: To read a lot of books; to try and keep his own prejudices down; to read a fair sampling of the field; and to review the good books that readers should read, and to warn the readers about books they shouldn't read, and to give his reasons for it as best he can so that the reader will have a chance to know whether he wants that book or not.

SFR: Do you think this influences the field very much?

DEL REY: Not a great deal. It makes it easier for some readers; that's all. Once they find a reviewer with whom they tend to agree, or once they learn the prejudices of the reviewer, then they can sometimes save a lot of trouble in getting the books they want. At least it will call attention to some books that should be read.

SFR: Did you ever think of writing more elaborate criticism, as opposed to reviewing?

DEL REY: I've done it, but not in the science fiction field. It's an entirely different art as far as I'm concerned. Criticism is for somebody who has already read the book, to make it more useful to them, or to indicate trends and other things in the field, but I don't do a great deal of that. I certainly don't do it in science fiction. I'm too closely involved with it.

SFR: Is the problem that you'd have trouble writing critical essays about books by people you know?

DEL REY: No, it isn't that so much. In the first place, while I love science fiction I don't think that most of it merits the type of criticism that more serious literature does, where you're dealing with types of writing, attitudes toward writing and that sort of thing. Most science fiction after all is meant to be read and enjoyed by

the readers, and, well if not forgotten at least not made a serious study of. It isn't really designed for that.

SFR: How do you define "serious literature" then? I mean, many of the great writings of the past, such as the plays of Shakespeare, were written as entertainment.

DEL REY: Very little great literature was ever written to be great literature. I think the man who sits down to write great literature winds up writing nit-picking stuff. Great literature is usually stuff that has stood the test of time. The only worthwhile critics in the long run are the masses of readers -- of intelligent readers. To me serious literature is that type of literature which will grow and develop within you. If you've read a book it doesn't come to an end when you've finished reading it. A serious book is one that will be with you in your head for the next ten years or twenty years or as long as you live and will continue to develop, and in a subtle way influence your attitudes.

SFR: Is science fiction capable of doing this?

DEL REY: I wouldn't say that there is any literature that cannot do that. I'm quite sure that science fiction can, and I'm sure that there are a few pieces here and there that deserve that, perhaps. Ursula LeGuin's *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* might turn out to be one of those. I suspect that for a great many people the body of sci-

ence fiction has done that although not so much the individual books.

SFR: Why is there so much work in the field which doesn't hold up as serious literature?

DEL REY: Well that's a very simple thing. We haven't been a particularly literary group. We've been a group which has essentially written an action-adventure story. God knows that's fine, but we've also written for low rates and for most of the time we've written for very little serious attention from the literary field, and unfortunately now that we've been discovered by the literary field it's the wrong books that are getting the serious attention. There's no particular drive to write that kind of thing. We're a pulp field, the last strong representative of one of the finest fields of writing, but not a literary field.

SFR: Isn't the distinction between "literature" and "pulp" arbitrary then? Isn't there a danger that the academics will revive and mummify something as "literature" which the public doesn't read anymore?

DEL REY: Only with bad science fiction, because the academic field is still trying to look at science fiction exactly the way they looked at the mainstream fiction and to judge it on those standards. Most of the academic field doesn't know that there is such a thing as pulp fiction, and pulp fiction has been under one name or another a very strong and lasting type of writing. It has to be two hundred years old



before they pay any attention to it. Sure. Scott gets some attention now, but generally speaking they're not interested in that. They want a highly introverted type of fiction in literary circles. Science fiction is an extremely extroverted field like most adventure fiction.

SFR: What are the main values of pulp fiction?

DEL REY: Pulp fiction is actually truer to human nature than most other fiction. We tend to use what might be called the universal values. You don't go into the hero now in any detail. You don't establish your characters with small, tiny strokes of the brush. You use broad sweeps. But in the long run that type of characterization usually can be read by more people for a longer period of time with understanding and identification, than the literary types.

SFR: Then the microscopically detailed characterizations will date because the next age won't understand it?

DEL REY: Yes and they're so often tied into the current activities. Well, TOM JONES is obviously a piece of pulp fiction in every way, and it still can be read. I don't think the plot is so great, but it certainly can be read today with understanding easily. I don't think that James Joyce's ULYSSES is going to last five hundred years. I don't see how it can, because there are so many of the background details relating to a certain time in Ireland that many younger readers today don't understand, and it's going to be less and less understandable as time goes on. Stephen Daedalus will be incomprehensible after a certain length of time.

SFR: How do you account for the success of a book like IDHAGREN, which puts most science fiction readers to sleep, but which other people seem to like?

DEL REY: It wasn't science fiction. I think it can be easily accounted for. It's the old standard story of the dispossessed person, the person who can find no hope for himself, who feels at odds with society, has no values of his own to give him a base yet. I would say that this is a fine book to make the displaced person, the person who doesn't feel at home, who is, oh, say a few years one side or the other of twenty, and looks up and sees a cockeyed world around him -- it will make him feel that yes, somebody understands me. He can identify with it. It doesn't have a story be-

hind it. It delivers no values and has no message, but maybe its emptiness is what rings true for some people.

SFR: Do you think a work like this will last into other ages? We always have dispossessed young people.

DEL REY: Yeah, but each of them has to have his dispossession take place in a milieu that is familiar to him. I think twenty years from now they'll be reading another book. I don't think this will last as long as THE FOUNDATION TRILOGY by Isaac Asimov, of all things.

SFR: To take something of yours for example, do you think NERVES will have any meaning a hundred years from now when people can't understand what was the big deal about atomic energy?

DEL REY: Well, they'll understand a hundred years from now because they'll still be wondering how in the hell they're going to get rid of some of the atomic wastes. But no, I don't think so. That was never written to last. I'm surprised at how long it has lasted. They're bringing out a new printing of it now. I'm very much surprised, because everything I wrote was written with the idea that it'll appear in a magazine; the readers of the magazine will hopefully enjoy it, and forget it. That's the way I wrote.

SFR: Aren't you selling yourself short? Take somebody like Alfred Bester. He's written very little in science fiction, but everything he has remains in print, so it ultimately pays for itself ten times over.

DEL REY: I have a larger percentage of my works in print than Alfred has of his total works. It's just an accident, because after we'd written all this stuff the books did take off and last. No, Alfred's stuff is at times written for the ages, but I don't think it'll last any longer than any other. Heinlein, for example, may outlast him. Heinlein is an example of somebody who's got his works in print. So is Asimov, and Clarke. Those are the three who have really stood out, much more than Bester.

SFR: Do you think Heinlein will last because of something in the personality of his writing, or what?

DEL REY: Because he was awfully good at making his backgrounds and his people on a casual level very believable. But, none of this is going to last. Sooner or later,

with a rare exception here and there, probably preserved for historical purposes, I think all science fiction is going to disappear. It's laid on the shakiest of all foundations, a future world, which is eventually going to run away from us and become so completely different from what we have written that the writing will no longer apply.

SFR: Have you ever thought of writing anything else besides science fiction?

DEL REY: If I'd wanted to, I would have done it. It isn't hard to write mainstream stuff. It's easier. I've done it.

SFR: How about fantasy?

DEL REY: Fantasy may last longer, some examples here and there. There's no way of telling what will last, because there you're closer to something that's universal. The drive toward fantasy, which is one of the drives toward science fiction too, is pretty deep within the soul of man. Fantasy doesn't have to tie itself to any particular here and now, or any scientific development, so it can last.

SFR: It seems to me that the two drive in opposite directions, because fantasy deals with the irrational, and science fiction starts out with the basic assumption that you can know, you can understand.

DEL REY: They're both essentially irrational in this sense: they don't happen.

SFR: Yes, but at least science fiction which is serious speculation ---

DEL REY: No it is not. Science fiction is fun speculation. Anybody who writes serious speculation is a fool, because ten years from now the basis for his speculation may very well be changed. It attempts to be honest with what



is known now, and tries to play around and see what would happen if. If I want to speculate seriously about the future, I'll go into articles and things like that.

SFR: What I mean by serious speculation may be shown in the difference between Heinlein's THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS and THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES. Whereas THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES transplants Illinois to Mars ---

DEL REY: It's fantasy essentially.

SFR: Yes, while THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS is about colonizing the moon. Heinlein tells how he thinks it might work.

DEL REY: And they're both so specific that eventually they'll dry up, they'll disappear. Whereas conceivably some of the stories of Fritz Leiber -- I'm picking them as a random example -- might last because he's in a never-land which does not change with time. When we get to Mars and start walking around on it, the mere fact that we know Mars well is going to make it hard to accept THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES. We've already gotten enough developments in computers and so on to be a little doubtful of Heinlein's book. Anyway, most of the writers of science fiction don't take themselves that seriously. Our job is not to predict. It is to speculate, and that's a game.

SFR: If you were to create a fantasy world in which science didn't apply and you were to make up all the rules, how would you do it?

DEL REY: I would first examine the basic nature of good and evil, since fantasy is very frequently a

game of good and evil. I would find my own rationale for good and evil --- not try and make one up, but find my own rationale for good and evil, and see how that can be adapted to a world, and from there on it's a game of setting up a world which will fit those rules.

SFR: Harry Stubbs once said he couldn't do it because if he violated one scientific premise of the real world this would have a ripple effect, and cause him to violate the next one and the next one and the next one, and so forth. Do you worry about this much?

DEL REY: Well, I worry enough about it in my science fiction that I figure out the orbits of every spacecraft I use and things like that, none of which gets into the story, but at least I figure it out for my own knowledge. And, basically I hate to go faster than light. I've done it in a few stories, but while I set up a cockeyed theory in my own head to account for it, nevertheless it bothers me. Time travel is something I touch very rarely, and when I've touched it it's a fixed time, not a mobile time thing. Yes, I worry about that.

SFR: Do you think that for purposes of authenticity a good scientific background is necessary?

DEL REY: I think that depends on the writer. If you know any science, yes it is. I think that a man who cannot see his world he is setting up as a whole, and cannot believe in it, should not be writing the story.

SFR: Well, the general public seems to accept things quite freely which are scientifically ludicrous, such as the new TV series SPACE:1999, if you know that.

DEL REY: Yes, I know that and it's totally ludicrous. I don't think in the long run they will accept it. I think STAR TREK will always outpull it because STAR TREK, while it might be juvenile in some ways, nevertheless has a world of its own which is pretty consistent, and which it follows.

SFR: Don't you think STAR TREK is also scientifically ludicrous?

DEL REY: Not really. What they've done is to bypass all the explanations. Oh, some of the individual stories are, but the series as a whole has not been ludicrous.

SFR: Have you ever felt any desire to write science fiction for the screen?

DEL REY: Hell no. I deliberately

stay away from the films. As a matter of fact once upon a time they sold NERVES to the movies, and at that time they were serious about bringing it out. Later it wasn't brought out. They wanted me to come out and work on the film. I simply flatly refused, or set my rate so high that they refused. I don't like the world of television and film writing at all. I've had a little experience with it and I don't like it.

SFR: Is it because people tamper with your material?

DEL REY: No it's a financial thing. I can make more money sitting down and writing a story by myself than wasting all the time in the endless conferences and other things. If I spent the same amount of time writing I'd make more money.

SFR: I've heard, for example, that Silverberg has landed the job of writing the STAR TREK movie, and he's been offered \$20,000. Can a writer just sitting down at the typewriter compete with that?

DEL REY: I can write two books and get myself that much money. Not immediately, but in the long run. And I can write the two books in a lot less time. I've made at least twenty cents a word for every word I've ever written in science fiction.

SFR: What are your writing methods like?

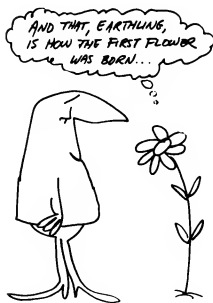
DEL REY: I have none. When the deadline gets close enough I sit down and do the book.

SFR: Do you write one draft, or use outlines, or what?

DEL REY: Well I know what my story is going to be before I ever write it. This I work out in great detail. I'm never surprised by the development of a character because I've known that before I ever put it on paper, because I've planned that all out ahead of time, but then I sit down with my carbon papers and put the paper in the typewriter and write it, and that is the draft that's submitted to the editor. That doesn't mean I won't tear out a page if it's gone wrong or something like that. I will, but I write final draft.

SFR: It sounds to me like you have very great powers of organization, quite unlike Thurber who allegedly wrote "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" thirty times.

DEL REY: Yes, and I have a feeling in the back of my head that maybe not his first, but the second or third draft would have been



as good as the final one. It's like Tolkien who never could let anything out of his hands. He kept redoing and redoing and redoing, and if it hadn't been for C.S. Lewis we probably wouldn't have Tolkien's works today. He finally got him to submit to the publisher. I doubt that beyond a certain level of correcting things you really improve much. You gradually write the life out of things. I do know of writers who write as much as a third draft and make small improvements on it. The second draft is probably a lot better than the first in their cases. In mine I know my story exactly before I sit down and write it. That's the whole point.

SFR: Do you have it completely verbalized before you sit down to write it?

DEL REY: No. I have the absolute feeling of it and the knowledge of how it develops.

SFR: Do you take the same approach in editing? If something is no good in the first draft, will you send it back to the writer for a revision?

DEL REY: I demand a fair amount from those who haven't done the job right. I demand that the writer do the best job he possibly can before I publish it. That sometimes means ten single spaced pages of copy going back to the writer telling him what to do.

SFR: Do you think a writer should, as Heinlein once said, never revise except to editorial specification?

DEL REY: Ni I don't, and neither does Heinlein in practice, because I've known Heinlein to do it. There was a case of METHUSELAH'S CHILDREN. When the paperback book came out he revised quite a bit of what the magazine version had been, which has already been revised three times. And he improved the ending considerably, and that was because he knew he should do it.

SFR: Did you revise the original "Nerves" into a novel because you felt it would come out better that way?

DEL REY: No, I revised it because Fred Pohl kept insisting that I should do it and Ballantine offered me a contract for it. And even then I was careful to touch it the minimum amount that I could. I simply went back and put in the characters that I hadn't developed in the novelet.

SFR: Do you feel that the novel version is superior?

DEL REY: Can't make up my mind.

Fletcher Platt just before he died told me I never should have touched it. Others tell me it's better that way. I don't know which it is. Probably the pacing of the novelet is tighter, but I think the extra development in the novel may have added something to it.

SFR: Do you feel comfortable tampering with your own work like that?

DEL REY: Perfectly comfortable. There's nothing that's sacred in anything I've written.

SFR: Who were the writers who influenced you early in science fiction, to get you to use these methods and take this attitude?

DEL REY: Nobody in science fiction influenced me that way. I'd read a hell of a lot of all kinds of things. If you want to pick an influence on my writing style it's probably from the reading of the Bible. I didn't imitate that style at all of course, but its condensed version of humanity was a very interesting one to me. I have no religious feelings at all. But look, my uncle was a writer. I was around professional writers a lot of the time. My attitude toward writing is a business-like one. Not my habits, but my attitude. It's like any other occupation. I'd be just as happy designing electronic circuits, or building houses, or doing anything else, of which I've had some experience with.

SFR: Do you find that you have to write, or do you only do it on demand?

DEL REY: When I had another income I didn't write. I'm not at all compulsive. I seem to be a minority that way.

SFR: Do you think it's essential that a pulp writer be well read outside of pulp fiction and understand other sorts of writing?

DEL REY: It's essential that any writer do that. I don't think you can learn to speak well if nobody around you speaks, if you don't hear people speaking. I don't think you can learn to write unless you hear other people writing, unless you see other people's writings. You've got to have an enormously higher input than you have output. The more a man reads the better he'll write. The more types of things he reads.

SFR: Do you feel there's a danger that someone might read something, overwhelmingly admire it, and start writing inferior imitations of it? Do you ever have that problem with your own work?



DEL REY: Only once, and that was by accident. Stephen Vincent Benet wrote a story called "The Last of the Legions" and I had read the story and admired it tremendously. Once I had an idea for a science fiction story which apparently was related to it and which I wrote up. Damon Knight pointed out the similarity. I took it off the market until Bob Lownedes finally asked me for another story. I warned him about it in advance; he read it and didn't think it was too close. I didn't really think it was too close either. There were a great many differences in it. That was an accident. Apparently my mind had slipped awareness of that. Otherwise I see no resemblance. I can be reading a swashbuckling story and sit down and write an entirely different type of story, because the style of a story is dictated by that story, not by what else I've read.

SFR: As an experienced writer, have you ever had the problem that you can no longer enjoy fiction because you're always looking through it for things you can use?

DEL REY: That's more true as a reviewer than as a writer. I don't look for other people's things to use. Occasionally you find a bit, but I don't do that. As a reviewer I sometimes find that I've gotten into the habit of reading too much to notice something for a review. This is a bad thing, and a danger that we slip into, but as a writer reading is still the same as ever.

SFR: When you write, do you work from the idea to the story?

DEL REY: I work from the basic idea, work myself out a solution to it, which may be rejected eventually; the characters come in incidentally, and gradually as I think about it the feeling of the story comes in, and that's it. But no themes. I don't work from a general theme. I work from the

plot backwards and sideways.

SFR: Does this include many of your early stories which are very strong in emotional appeal?

DEL REY: Well, they're from the realization of something. In those days most of the readers of science fiction -- not all, but many -- were young and somewhat lonely. And you'll find a very strong theme of loneliness through all those, because that was a good way of touching the reader easily.

SFR: Something like "Helen O'Loyn"

DEL REY: Is a perfect example of every young man's wish-dream of the kind of woman he could get. And that's why -- chauvinistic as it is...it's probably the most chauvinistic story ever written...it still stands up and a number of women still read it too, because in a way Helen is a kind of dream woman for them too.

SFR: Do you think that story could be sold and would hold up today for the more varied audience we now have?

DEL REY: It's being done so regularly. I get much more per year for that story now than when I first wrote it.

SFR: What you you think is your best story?

DEL REY: That's one of them. "For I Am a Jealous People" and "Nerves" I suppose are some of them. I think the best story I ever wrote was an adventure for kids called "Cave of Spears" but that's neither here nor there. That's outside the field.

SFR: If I recall correctly, "For I Am a Jealous People" was basically an anti-religious story ---

DEL REY: Well...no. God was our enemy in the story, but it wasn't necessarily anti-religious. I took as my postulate the question of where is the ultimate responsibility of a preacher. To his flock or to his god? And when he found that God was at war with him he found it made no great difference to him. He had to discover that it was his people that he was responsible to.

SFR: As someone with no religious beliefs at all, do you feel comfortable writing science fiction about God?

DEL REY: Totally. It's a perfectly fine piece of fantasy. I'd just as happily write about God as I would about witches or elves or anything else.

SFR: But when you write a science

fiction story about God you bring the diety into the real universe, subject him to real physical laws--

DEL REY: There are three explanations for the existence of the universe. It created itself; it was spontaneously created for no good reason at all; or somebody created it. Now I don't happen to believe somebody created it, but it's as valid an explanation as any other, so I'm perfectly happy to go ahead with it.

SFR: Do you ever worry about, or deliberately make an attempt at being blasphemous?

DEL REY: Hell no. The man who still has some religious feelings may try to be blasphemous, but in my head, in my emotional head,



there is no God. How could it be blasphemous? There's nothing to be blasphemous against. I don't write for shock value. Shock value is such a transitory thing, and such a poor way to attract readers; I don't write for that.

SFR: Do you ever write to get something accomplished? Now what I have in mind is Michael Moorcock's "Behold the Man" which allegedly was written deliberately to tear down and finish once and for all the Christ myth. This is very naive, of course, but he was trying.

DEL REY: No, I wouldn't do a thing like that. I don't think it's any of my business to tear out any other man's ideas unless that man's ideas are actually hurting me.

SFR: Then you do think reality matters?

DEL REY: Oh yes, I think reality matters like the devil. I think we all have to deal with reality, even if it's a made-up reality. It has to have the same fundamental things behind it as the reality we know. I'm very much a believer in reality, as best as I can determine it. Now define reality for me?

SFR: It just strikes me as odd that we have a universe in which everybody has their own god and their own separate reality.

DEL REY: Ninety-nine percent of the realities are the same, unless you're dealing with insane people, and I don't think you are. The point is that our perception of reality is in such general agreement that each small deviation from it stands out.

SFR: Then we all have different explanations for it?

DEL REY: I think we've all got a lot of small explanations for small parts of our reality, but we all accept the general reality so much that when we start talking about reality we neglect most of the things we are in agreement on.

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Del Rey.

---Recorded at the First World Fantasy Convention, Halloween weekend, 1975, Providence, RI.

"I think television is one of the most dangerous forces in our lives today ... It could become an opiate, a much stronger and more efficient opiate of the masses than religion ever was.

"I sat in a meeting many years ago where one of the heads of syndication was talking to some other syndicators. They were discussing the sales of programs in Africa. At that time Africa had newly emerging states in turmoil. And this gentleman said something that chilled me. He said, 'Don't give me the armies of Africa; I don't need control of the governments. You give me television in Africa for ten years and in ten years I will own the continent.'"

---Gene Roddenberry, PENTHOUSE, March, 1976 (Tnx to John Kelly)

The wicked-at-heart probably know something.

---Carl Juarez

Paranoids make poor customers; they always think I'm out to take advantage of them.

---Used Car Salesman

UFOLOGICAL ARCHETYPES

SAUCERS AND SAUCERERS

By Allen H. Greenfield
PANP Press, Box 98214, Braircliff
Branch, Atlanta. GA 30329. \$1.00

Reviewed By Neal Wilgus

Here's an inexpensive booklet which should be of interest to SF fans on a couple of counts. Composed of a number of brief essays originally published in Greenfield's zine UFOLOGY NOTEBOOK over the past several years, SAUCERS presents both a new theory on the meaning of UFOs and a short history of UFO conventions.

Acknowledging earlier schools of thought such as the contactees, the scientific investigators and the alternate reality buffs, Greenfield presents his own Subjective Hypothesis which holds that whatever the nature of the UFO phenomena the significant thing is the human, subjective response. And the human response to unidentified flying objects, Greenfield holds, is much like historical responses to the mystical something which has driven mythological archetypes and religious manifestations down through the centuries.

The best piece in SAUCERS, however, is Greenfield's account of the evolution of UFO conventions. Beginning in 1964 at what Greenfield believes to be his initial suggestion, UFO cons have been held annually, riding out boom and bust years which appear to go in cycles of something less than a decade. Totally different from SF conventions, UFO cons are apparently straight, formal, conservative. Greenfield is something of a radical, trying with little success to open things up to new ideas.

Greenfield claims to have seen a UFO when he was 13, to have been introduced to serious UFOlogy by his initial selection from the SF Book Club, THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS. He has other connections with SF: a one-shot zine with articles on Fort and HPL, contributions in GREEN EGG and attendance at a number of SF conventions. His booklet is somewhat lacking in details and often assumes the reader's knowledge of UFOlogy is as complete as his -- but it's an interesting look at some new ideas & at the recent history of one of SF's mutant cousins.

Blended be he who expects
miracles, for he is a
Democrat.

A DISPASSIONATE LETTER FROM GEORGE WARREN

April 10, 1976

'I am so fucking mad I want to punch somebody out. I walked out of the Science Fiction Writers of America convention last night, vowing never to return. I have never run into a more cold, unfriendly, clannish bunch of sons of bitches in my whole life. Everyone, it appears, is used to fan conventions and being surrounded by Adoring Fans who will put up with the pecking order treatment. Fuck that noise. Either I am among my peers the moment I go in the fucking door or they should not have let me in with active status. Being



new I was ignored or avoided. I will not put up with that kind of shit from anyone. It is emblematic of the whole day that I passed Offutt, going out mad as hell, and tried to stop him in the hall to say goodbye and salvage what I mistakenly thought was the one fairly pleasant contact I'd made during the day and could not even get him to slow down on his way in to the festivities. Today's thing was to have been a business meeting and a banquet. I am an excellent organization man, and had some ideas to advance. Fuck 'em. I think I will stick to writing nasty letters to the FORUM... if indeed I ever get it. (My application went in in January and I have not even received the BULLETIN yet, two issues ago.)

'Even the people I thought I'd like, talking shop in the afternoon panels, turned out to be sons of bitches. It would never even occur to me to let a new member of anything twist in the goddam wind that way. Everything boiled down to a matter of calculated snubs vs. unconscious ones. I'm not at the moment inclined to forgive either, or be "understanding" about anything. Anything at all.

'Funny... my first impression was a bad one, first time I read a copy of the FORUM some time back. I must learn to trust my first impressions. They are the voice of experience speaking.

'Bah! Shit! Thunder and Lightning! Murder! Plague! Pestilence! Boils and chancres! Wipe 'em out, boys, and don't leave so much as a woman or child alive!'

FIRST THE GOOD NEWS...

TOMORROW TODAY
Edited By George Zebrowski
Unity Press, \$3.95

Reviewed By Neal Wilgus

Trying to depict tomorrow today is as disappointing as the daily news if this anthology from George Zebrowski is any indication. The good news is that a new small press publisher, Unity, has initiated a new line of sf anthologies, the Planet series. The bad news: the first volume is a dud.

For the record, there are stories here by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Gregory and James Benford, Mack Reynolds, Glen Cook, Edgar Pangborn, James Stevens and Norman Kagan---plus an introduction by "futurist" John McHale. This is a quality production, too, designed to appeal to the college market and with an eye-catching cover by Eric Mathes.

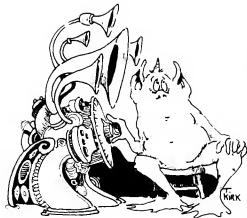
Alas, the package is mostly empty. Not one story struck me as moving, original, inspired or even very interesting. None of them is downright bad, but none will leave a lasting impression on your mind or on sf in general. McHale's introduction is a waste of paper.

Well, Planet Two, BIO-GENESIS, will be out soon, also edited by Zebrowski and consisting of three novellas 'based on the concepts founded in human metamorphosis' explains Unity's catalogue. Let's give Zebrowski and his crew one more chance.

NOISE LEVEL

a column

john brunner



ON THE CARE AND FEEDING OF A GUEST OF HONOR

There ought - really ought - to be a handbook of established practice available to people planning science fiction conventions. In the United States, and in Britain to a lesser extent, there exists a tradition of expertise and experience which could save a lot of people from repeating mistakes already solved elsewhere.

With the transformation, on the one hand, of "world" cons into events that really do move around from year to year, as far as Australia now, and the spread, on the other, of "conferences" and "congresses" dedicated to SF (which - alas - have been known to be devoted to lining the organisers' pockets), it seems time to take formal stock of the body of knowledge to which so many people over a long time have made contributions now going to waste.

(This is the point at which, no doubt, numerous readers will say, "But such a guide exists!" Don't send me a copy, please! Just remember that the following remarks apply to con-organisers who very definitely don't have access to any usable handbook.)

The fact, regrettably, stands: people trying to cobble together SF jamborees under whatever name, particularly in Europe, are repeating mistakes made a thousand times before, and now and then yours truly has bumped into them. Here are some for instances.

There was a convention in France at which not only was there no convenient meeting-place for members - we had to make do with cafes open to the public, as best we could - but the organisers (who numbered far too few to cope with the week-long programme) had forgotten to check whether their dates had been pre-empted. In the same town at the same time there was a reunion of former Maquis fighters... and all the hotels had been booked up and come Sunday night every nearby restaurant was full. We had to drive miles into

the country for a meal.

There was a con in Stockholm where Marjorie and I were accommodated in the hotel where it was taking place, a Very Grand sort of place. We were told our meals were paid for; we duly ate one evening's dinner in the dining room... and it was ghastly! It was all bow-ties and a cocktail pianist! And none of the convention members joined us.

We inquired discreetly why - and it turned out the committee had assumed protocol demanded we be fed on the spot, but no one else could afford the prices. We said the hell with that and next time went out and ate in a cheap Italian restaurant much patronised by students which was where everybody else was going.

It had not struck them that someone as august as the Guest of Honor might prefer to eat in pleasant company, rather than - at the con's expense - sit through a bad meal served by far too many waiters to the background of what amounted to live Muzak.

We had better food, incidentally, in the cafeteria of the Swedish -Lloyd ferry we went home on.

And, quite recently, I received a letter from Holland describing a convention which, they say, is supported by all the major SF clubs in the country, and in Flemish-speaking Belgium. Would I be the Guest of Honor?

aying not only my own travel expenses, but the cost of a hotel room for me and Marjorie, and all our food and drink, and no doubt garaging the car for the weekend.. I kid you not. They wanted me to go entirely and absolutely at my own expense, when it now costs us about £68 to take the ferry handiest to where we live from Britain to the French coast, let alone the petrol (gas to you) the car burns on the rest of the journey.

That was the guy with whom I lost my temper. I explained the meaning of the phrase "like a Dutch uncle" and then talked to him like one. He wrote back in the most abject and charming terms, apologising profusely and altogether making it plain that neither he nor his colleagues had thought out in detail the kind of points I'd made.

Which is why we need that con-organisers' handbook! Lately I was checking through some old documents. I realised that, if Britain wins the bid for a worldcon in 1979, the budget to insure the art-show alone will be greater than the entire funds handled by the committee at the first London worldcon... on which I served.

I'm not sure whether the people mounting the bid are aware of just how huge recent worldcons have become, and how many more people will want to come to England than went to Australia.

The handbook I envisage would cover a wide range of detail. It would make clear in advance, for example, how functional the idea of having the con under one roof has always proved (he said feelingly, having attended conventions at places like Heidelberg and Angoulême where people were obliged to trudge weary miles late at night) - because, obvious though this may appear in retrospect, it seems not to have crossed the minds of some con-organisers.

The lack of suitable facilities in many countries is another matter; traditions differ. But where it can be done that way I imagine most people will agree that it should be.

Some indication should be given of what has worked as a programme item; some indication, likewise, should be given of the shape a committee has if it's to cope - numbers, responsibilities, and so forth. Personal experiences should be freely cited, but clearly footnoted to explain when the problems were special to one particular con, when they were symptomatic of a more general difficulty.

And what I would personally be very happy to contribute would be the chapter on how to handle the Goh. I'm pleased to say that my experience in that role is very wide now - Britain and the States, Italy and France, Sweden and Germany...

Now and then, as in the Swedish case cited above, it's been almost embarrassing. Always flattering, naturally! But...

Well, there was a weekend in France when I went awfully hungry - this, in the land with the finest cooking in the world apart from Chinese! - because someone took it for granted that all us Britons love their bloody beefsteak. I don't enjoy meat much, and steak I actually detest, but up came one set menu after another and there wasn't time for an alternative because the mealtimes were, especially in French terms, much too short and we had to get back and carry on with the programme.

I managed to make the problem clear to the hotel staff, and they brought me some delicious cheese instead. But when one is a guest, being paid for, one doesn't like to generate waves...

These are trivial problems in retrospect. But one can envision occasions when they become major. Some people have allergies; some, dietary preferences - vegetarian, or kosher, or prescribed by a doctor. Some people tire easily, while others bounce; some are victims of travellers' tummy (ot the Turkey trots, or whatever) while others eat whatever's going and ask for more.

It would be nice if convention organisers found time to ask their guests the relevant questions in advance.

WHERE MAGIC WORKS

THE COMPLETE ENCHANTER
By L. Sprague de Camp
& Fletcher Pratt
Ballantine, 1976, 420 pp., \$1.95

Reviewed By Darrell Schweitzer

Ballantine has done us all a great service by reissuing the first two Harold Shea books in a single attractive volume. For the very reasonable (by today's standards) price of two bucks we get THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER, THE CASTLE OF IRON, and a new afterward by de Camp about Fletcher Pratt and their collaborations.

Harold Shea, for the benefit of those unenlightened souls who have not already encountered him, is a university professor with a knack for projecting himself into alternate universes where things we consider myths in this world are real. De Camp and Pratt wrote a series of novellas about Shea, first for the greatest of all pulp magazines, UNKNOWN, in the early 1940's, and then one each after the war for FANTASY

FICTION and BEYOND. "The Roaring Trumpet", in which Harold arrives in the cosmos of the Norse gods right in time for the last battle, and "The Mathematics of Magic", set in the universe of Spenser's THE FAIRIE QUEEN make up the first volume. "Castle of Iron" set in the world of ORLANDO FURIOSO was expanded into a novel by de Camp and published first as a book in 1950. These three are what you get in the present Ballantine edition. The last two, "The Wall of Serpents" (in the setting of the KALEVALA) and "The Green Magician" (Ouchulain's Ireland) have been out of print for years, and aren't included for reasons of space and contracts, alas. (Your best bet for these is to hunt down the original magazines, which aren't nearly as rare as the clothbound book, THE WALL OF SERPENTS.)

The Shea stories were written to be, and still are, enormously entertaining. They've dated a little, but not seriously. If anything the now rather quaint pre-war college atmosphere and slang have added to the effect. Once Shea is into the various universes and trying to survive by applying their frequently unreliable scientific knowledge from their native cosmos (e.g. in the Norse world you can light a fire with a spell, but matches don't work) the results are frequently hilarious. The comedy mostly derives from anachronism, rather like that used by T.H. White to such great effect in ONCE AND FUTURE KING. Gods and famous heroes are made to behave like ordinary folks, and the approach to magic is strictly that of a 20th Century engineer. This could be corny if done badly, but it's done very well indeed. I particularly like the enchanters' conference which is a parody of an academic scientific meeting, complete with readings of learned papers with such titles as "Ye Powers Magical of Six Selected Water Fay - Human Hybrids" and "Of Ye Comparative Efficacy of Ye Essence of Ye Spotted Frogge & Ye Common Green Frogge in Sleeping Enchantments." Sometimes there are misfires, and the reader is left suspecting that Harold and friends are on the wrong side. I definitely preferred the roguish enchanters to the rather obnoxious, self-righteous knights in the FAIRIE QUEEN sequence who went around knocking them off.

Of course it doesn't really matter, because nothing is to be taken seriously. You're along for the ride and nothing more. These stories are unashamedly escapist fiction, and as such succeed splendid-

ly. If you spend all day coping with reality at your job and want to take a vacation for an hour or two in the evening, then this is your book.

LETTER FROM K.W. JETER

May 15, 1976

'I thought Lynne Holdom's review of my book SEEKLIGHT in SFR #16 was fair. Thanks, and I am encouraged by her words, and am writing more. Specifically, another Laser due out next month-- #33, THE DREAMFIELDS; have just finished a historical fantasy about King Arthur, part of a series written with Ray Nelson and Tim Powers, another new Laser writer; and starting on another Laser book (which will be #64) to be titled THE LAST WRONG NUMBER.

'I hope SEEKLIGHT doesn't go by without somebody besides myself taking note of the heroic and entirely selfless efforts Barry Malzberg performed on my behalf. After spending a great deal of time trying to sell my actual first novel (not SEEKLIGHT) without success (all the editors said things like gee, good book, too bad we don't publish things with sex and violence in them), Barry sold Roger Elwood on the idea of a new writer-



ers mini-series in the Laser line, did all the editorial work for it, and so forth. I can't ever repay Barry enough, as I owe the start of my career and almost quite literally my life to him.

'However-- somewhere in the discussions between Barry, Roger and myself I was given the impression that the Laser books were going to be a juvenile series-- teenagers, "young adults", etc. In fact, I remember one telephone conversation that went "Think early Heinlein juveniles, K.W." "Well...I don't like early Heinlein juveniles so much. How about early Andre Norton juveniles?" "Perfect." So actually, SEEKLIGHT is something of a loving tribute on my part to all those books I read when I was a kid, and still do admire. (In case you're wondering, I'm not so hot on Heinlein's juveniles because the young people in them all seem to act and think like older people believe young people act and think. Norton's young people are all as serious-minded as real ones are.)

'THE DREAMFIELDS, then, is closer to my real intentions in writing science fiction. I hope it comes to your or Lynne Holdom's attention. Either the direction of Laser books has changed or my confusion about it has cleared up, but I think you'll be seeing some excellent adult books from them.'

THE STYTHIAN DEPTHS....

FLOATING WORLDS

By Cecelia Holland
Knopf, 1976, 465 pp., \$10.95

Reviewed By A. Peter Cannon

I found this book while browsing in the local library. There was nothing to indicate that it was science fiction until I noticed that the dust jacket said that Ms. Holland had given the reader, "a whole new world of history-to-be." That sounded to me like science fiction, so I decided to try it.

Surprise! It's one of the best books I've read recently. In spite of a weak ending it clearly deserves to be considered for a Hugo.

Action centers on Paula Mendoza. Like most other residents of Earth's domes (necessitated by pollution) she is an anarchist. Because she accidentally learned Styth while in jail on Mars she is chosen by the committee which "governs" Earth to negotiate with the Styth Empire. The Styths are a barbaric (at least to the people of the Inner Planets),

mutant-human people who live in large bubbles floating high in the stratospheres of the gas giants.

This is not a technologically oriented novel. How the Styths mutated is a mystery, as is the origin and nature of the bubbles in which they live. The ships just fly. Ms. Holland is much more concerned with society and politics, and we get a detailed picture of Styth society and a less detailed picture of relations between the various planetary cultures. On this level the novel is concerned with how a pacifistic anarchist can promote peaceful relations between an unorganized Earth, a racist Mars, and an imperialistic but equally racist Styth Empire.

Finally, however, the novel is concerned with character. How does a woman of strong personality and developed ethics deal with the male chauvinist Styth leader, Saba, especially when it becomes expedient that she be his wife. It is on this level that the novel is most exciting. Paula Mendoza is one of the deepest and most interesting characters to appear in science fiction in some time.

LETTER FROM JERRY POURNELLE

15 May, 1976

'I am considerably cheered to find that most commentators on my SFR interview were pleased. However, I must disagree with Mr. Paul Walker's interpretation of what I said.

'I don't "believe in money like [sic] some believe in God." I do think there needs to be some shorthand for the phrase "human and technological resources", and I suspect that any large technological society will find valuta of some kind a necessity; barter is rather inefficient. If Walker preferred me to say that three quarters of the world lives in poverty because they

don't have anything of sufficient value to exchange with the West for the technological goods and services which they will require, and lack the stored resources to allow large parts of their population to work on projects of future but not immediate consumable production of goods and services instead of the phrase "investment capital" I have no strong intellectual objection; although it seems clumsy and contrived.

'Nor did I anywhere defend the Aswan dam or say that some big single system is what Pakistan needs. Yet I suspect that Walker and I would reach the same conclusions about a lot of things--and it is unusual, to say the least, to find myself, a conservative, berated for too much attention to things. I'm often taken to task for the opposite view. As Burke said, "The age of chivalry is dead; that of economists, calculators and sophisters is at hand; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever." Or "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind." I completely agree with Walker that social organization and tradition are enormously important.

'However, humane institutions are generally a feature of, if not wealthy societies, at least societies in which there is not famine and starvation; and often wealth allows a society to afford humane treatment to persons who would be, in a poorer order, executed or banished or enslaved.

'Finally: I've never said nuclear power plants are safe. I have said their social costs seem to me to be lower than the social costs of coal. The probability of a billion dollar nuclear accident is small, between one in ten million and one in a hundred billion, depending on who does the analysis; but the probability that the Government will have to pay a billion dollars in compensation to miners invalidated by black lung is one. It



already happens. And although I wish it were otherwise, we have only two choices: coal and nuclear. In twenty years there'll be others, and perhaps we can do without either; but not now.'

((The arguments that nuclear power plants have too short a working life and too high initial cost, and that we are rapidly running out of uranium in the U.S. and will soon have to depend on foreign supplies (as with oil--and again be vulnerable to foreign extortion) are more persuasive to me for not getting in too deep in the nuclear swamp. Besides, all that 'hot' waste material bothers me.))

NIVEN'S ARM HAS QUITE A REACH

THE LONG ARM OF GIL HAMILTON

By Larry Niven

Ballantine, 176 pp., 1976, \$1.50

Reviewed By Michael Vilain

For the everyday bookstore browser, the blending of science fiction and detective stories into one unique genre would seem absurd. Alternate-world doubles standing in for the hero at crucial moments or a robo-butler killing its master and continuing blithely on its daily rounds---such visions might pass before the browser's eyes as he shudders and quickly moves to the English Literature section. But this is not the case with Larry Niven's new collection, *THE LONG ARM OF GIL HAMILTON*; there isn't some Godmachine created to resolve the conflicts and have everyone live happily ever after. Niven relies on tightly written narrative, deep, incisive characterizations, and cold, intuitive logic rather than gadgets and psi powers (ESP) to tell his stories. I'm not saying these elements don't exist in the stories---they just aren't the important parts; their purpose is to add "flavor" and the unexpected.

Gil Hamilton got his nickname, Gil the Arm, from his Belter friends (inhabitants of the asteroid belt) when he would hold his cigaret with his imaginary hand, a rationalization his mind created to compensate for the loss of his own right arm in a mining accident in the Belt. A latent psi ability made the hand real, only this hand was better in some ways than the old one. Gil finally decides to give up asteroid mining, returns to Earth, and reapplies for UN citizenship. He is accepted and a replant is done to replace his lost

arm, but his mind still acknowledges the existence of his imaginary arm.

He decides to join the United States Technical Police, whose main duties are the suppression of new weapons and technologies, the enforcement of the Fertility Laws, and the tracking down of dealers in illegal organ transplants---the organleggers. Even though transplants have become routine, it's still hard to find an acceptable donor. Back in the late 21st Century, Vermont made the organ banks the official means of execution; other states soon followed suit, for a convicted ax murderer could conceivably save more lives than he took by being broken down for the organ banks. Eventually all convicted criminals were sentenced to the organ banks. There was always someone who couldn't stand the idea of visiting the corner drugstore autocad once a week for dialysis and just had to have that kidney transplant now, or someone who was revolted by the idea of wearing contact lenses and just had to have a new pair of eyes instead. For these people the organleggers found the nobodies, the transients, or the faceless workers of the fusion plants without relatives or someone who cared, and broke them down into their component parts, netting millions from the organs of a single catch.

In "Death By Ecstasy", Gil investigates the apparent suicide of a close friend and ends up uncovering the largest organlegging operation in the western section of the United States. "The Defenseless Dead" shows the implications of the passing of the Freezer Bill. In "Arm" Gil must solve a classic locked-door murder.

This is not the first attempt at SF detective stories. By far, this is but the most recent; Isaac Asimov's two novels and numerous short stories of the cases of Dr. Wendell Urth and Lije Bailly, Alfred Bester's *THE DEMOLISHED MAN*, and Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories---these are just a few of the other works of SF and Detective fiction. What stands out the most in Niven's stories is the depth of development of the societies of Earth, the Belt, and later on, the stellar colonies of Plateau, Jinx, and Home (introduced in other stories). Niven's approach to building a future is to assemble the technology and determine what would happen to our Terran society as a result.

Those familiar with Niven's works will recognize the characters and setting of these stories as part

of the Known Space series, a collection of short stories and novels spanning from 1.5 billion years ago to 1200 years in the future and covering a sphere roughly 30 light years in diameter. These stories fill the chronological gap between *PROTECTOR* and *A GIFT FROM EARTH* and are the last of the Known Space series to be published. The entire series of Known Space is a superior piece of science fiction writing, similar to Robert A. Heinlein's *Future History* in intent, but more sweeping in time and scope.

LETTER FROM JOHN SHIRLEY

June, 1976

'I have nothing but contempt for writers who constantly whine and squeal in letter columns and counter-reviews when their work is panned. So I'm not going to defend my story, "Uneasy Chrysalids, Our Memories," despite Glycer's misinterpretation of it. Not much, anyway.

((See Mike Glycer's review of *EPOCH* in *SFR* 17.))

'But he rendered me the most vicious insult possible, in my view. Oh, why didn't he say that the story was useless nonsense and leave it? But no--- he had to say that I made a Political Statement! I revile political statements! I HATE politics. When I include sociological extrapolation it is setting, nothing more. Background frippery. I am absolutely apolitical and I'd like the opportunity to make that clear here--- I shudder at the thought of being labeled a writer of political rhetoric. What if someone should take him seriously? Why didn't he call me a child molester? Or a turd-eating jackass? That would have been only one-tenth as bad, in my view. I'm not joking. I want it known that I do not write political statements, unless one can consider the disavowal of such items an anarchist manifesto, which it is in certain definitions of anarchism. But no, not even that. I just want to watch the pretty colors and kick the stones and die in peace. Maybe, along the way, make a few cave-drawing scratches and call them novels... The story was a poetic statement and much of what is wrong with modern sf, of what has permitted it to sink back into space opera, is the inability of most readers and critics to comprehend poetic symbolism; it is work to interpret a metaphor, they want the meanings of the fictions tossed onto their laps,

(which is TV mentality) and they don't care to work for it. Unless there is work nothing is learned, the reader--especially the dozens of conformed critics like Glycer--desires only reinforcement for neurotic fantasies. "Uneasy Chrysalids..." was a metaphor of the vengeful and tenacious nature of repressed memories.

I also took exception to his comments concerning Barrett's brilliant "Nightbeat" which is one of the finest pieces of prose I've ever read. Glycer was simply too lazy or ill-equipped to achieve the instant of illumination which comes to those who can sacrifice their tawdry egos and stagnant energies in exchange for the artist's vision.

"He calls us pretentious? But he says 'every time I read something like this I think I'd like to give the writer a swift kick in the pants...' We are pretentious? Yet he feels his own critical faculty is so flawless that he can conceive of doing physical violence to a struggling artist whose product did not match Glycer's cardboard cut-out standards. Who gave Glycer this fascist authority?

"No wonder sf is regressing. Glycer and critics of his ilk are ballast in this balloon; they are holding us down; let us pitch them overboard and ascend."

(Task. John, who gave you the fascist authority to do terminal physical violence to a struggling young critic whose product....

(I have read your story in EPOCH. Mike could easily have been less brutal in his assessment, but in essence I agree with him.

(Your story may indeed in your mind and intent be a metaphor, but it reads like a fair of story mangled by a trite ending and knee-jerk anti-fascist, "liberal" attitudes.

(And so I suggest you consider that Mike Glycer is a bright, young sf enthusiast who reads a great deal of sf, and if he missed what you were trying to make clear, then what of the thousands of casual sf readers even less perceptive and less well grounded by college and outside reading? Fuck them, you say? But, John, they are your audience! They are the ones who, ultimately, pay you, galling to you as that may be. You cannot break them, but they can crush you. They are a great slaving beast. John. Please them...or suffer awful frustration, starvation, and even having to go to work.

((The 'artist' assumes, when

condemning the "dumb, unappreciative" readers, that what he has to say is worth working hard to know. Alas....all too often the readers are right in not bothering to do the work. En masse, the readers have a very keen nose; they almost always know when they're being conned or being fed shit labeled literature.

((Go, John, sit in the violet how while the corruscating nightthings tramble in the wetwater and know in your left ventricle that yes the splendid concepts of unknowingness are there like placid carp in the thought pool of evermind if only Walt Disney would only get the hell out of the way. Right? My meaning is perfectly clear, isn't it? You'll just have to study that passage a bit longer....))



A BOX OF SPECULATIONS

THE INFINITY BOX
By Kate Wilhelm
Harper & Row, \$8.95

Reviewed By George R. R. Martin

Kate Wilhelm has been a first-rank talent in SF for a number of years now, producing a steady stream of finely-crafted short fictions and novels. Her critical notices are invariably, and deservedly, excellent. Year after year new Wilhelm stories appear on the final Nebula ballot, a clear indication of the respect her fellow professionals have for her work.

Despite all of this, however, Wilhelm has somehow maintained a strange invisibility within the genre. She is a Nebula winner and a regular Nebula finalist, for example, but she is not often found on the Hugo ballot. She is unjustly overlooked when people talk a-

bout the field's top writers, and her audience has seemingly remained smaller than the rabid followings of less-talented writers.

Why?

THE INFINITY BOX (Harper & Row, \$8.95), a collection of some of Wilhelm's best short fiction, goes a long way towards answering that question. It is subtitled "A Collection of Speculative Fiction," and in her introduction Wilhelm explains why she prefers this label to the standard tag, science fiction. "The problem with labels," she writes, "is that they all too quickly become eroded; they cannot cope with borderline cases at all ... Science fiction came to mean almost everything that was not mundane, realistic fiction; aliens, galactic wars, robots, social satires, heroic fantasy..."

The difficulty with Wilhelm's own fiction, of course, is that it contains none of this at all, which is probably why she has never been as popular as she deserves to be. Readers come to books with certain sets of preconceptions, and the reader who comes to a Wilhelm book expecting a galactic war is going to be sadly disappointed. Undeniably a superb writer, Wilhelm is still a borderline case, and the brand of quiet, low-key SF she produces often looks so much like "mundane, realistic fiction" as to be indistinguishable to the average reader.

There is both strength and weakness in the path that Wilhelm has chosen. No doubt that by going this way she has avoided much that is stale in SF; a Wilhelm story is always tight and tense and well-wrought, the prose polished to a fine sheen, and it is never, never trite. Yet, at the same time, Wilhelm has sacrificed many of the peculiar strengths of the genre; the freedom, the broad horizons, the unique perspective on the mystery and wonder and romance of humanity and its universe. Except for the title, there is not much of infinity in this latest Wilhelm collection, and the speculations seem small and timid compared to other writers.

The book contains ten stories, all of them atypical SF but typical Kate Wilhelm. Every story is set on Earth. Most take place either in the present or in the very near future, and the few that venture further into tomorrow are the least effective. The quality is uneven, of course, as in any assembly of short stories, but on the whole it is frighteningly high. Its

strengths are Wilhelm's strengths; settings vividly realized, characters the reader knows and cares about and bleeds for, prose used like a fine instrument to accomplish exactly what Wilhelm wants. She is a richly visual writer, a writer who can set a scene and lend it drama and make her people stand up and move, and those are skills never to be taken lightly. Her use of language is crystalline and exact; sampling it as a writer, I could only sit back and blink and gnash my teeth in furious envy. The power of these collected stories derives from these Wilhelm-esque strengths, not from their imaginative content, which is scant. Wilhelm's strangenesses are small ones.

The title story, "The Infinity Box," is the finest in the volume, a portrait of a normal, decent man who one day discovers that he has the power to enter and "possess" the mind of his neighbor, a weak and terrified young woman. His struggles against the power, and finally against his victim, is a gripping psychosexual nightmare that brilliantly illuminates one man's corruption and one woman's growth.

Equally potent is "The Red Canary," a short grim tale of the affluent society in collapse, in which Wilhelm weaves a tapestry of small tragedies and great despairs, and paints the end of modern civilization far more effectively than a dozen John Brunners with their wide-screen technicolor disasters. "The Village" has the same virtues of power and economy; without a word of rationale, Wilhelm marches an American combat troop out of Vietnam and into a rural village in the U.S.A., and lets her straightforward and blood-thirsty fable play itself out.

Another story worthy of special notice is "April Fool's Day Forever," which comes perilously close to being a real masterpiece and then throws it all away. It is a chilling piece, about death and immortality and art and paranoia-that-isn't-quite-paranoia, and the characters invite the reader to the page right up until the hideously flawed ending where, in the tradition of ANDROMEDA STRAIN, the problem conveniently solves itself.

Less ambitious but more successful is "The Time Piece," a minor story of wasted lives that embodies a lovely character sketch. The rest of the volume is made up of distinctly lesser works, only one of which requires a special comment --- the highly lauded "The Funer-

al," a much-overpraised story that is a good deal too obscure, and pales when set alongside of Wilhelm's really major work.

SF, in its last decade, has generated its own spectrum of literary ideologies, and any analysis of Kate Wilhelm must touch on the question of what the field is all about. Everyone agrees that SF is fusing with the mainstream nowadays; but there is a good deal of discord about exactly what parts of SF are to be fused with what parts of the mainstream. There are those who clearly feel embarrassed by the traditional "furniture" of the genre --- the spaceships and the robots and the aliens. There are others who love them, and still a third group who see the old gimmicks as useful literary devices, the symbols of a new fantasy, freight with emotional power.

Returning, then, to the original question; Kate Wilhelm is one hell of a fine writer, among the best we've ever had. So why isn't she richer and more famous? The answer could depend on where you're coming from...one faction might shout that SF readers are an indiscriminating audience, bores who ignore the top writers to laud PERRY RHODAN and STAR TREK. For myself, I think that explanation is simplistic nonsense. Others might argue that Wilhelm is not a good writer after all, that she doesn't tell "stories", that she's a mainstream writer in drag polluting the precious bodily fluids of the field. All of which is just too absurd for anyone who has ever read Wilhelm.

My own theory? SF today is big enough for all sorts of writers to thrive and make a living, but invariably some will get more recognition than others. The field's top names in the years to come will not be illiterate spaceship shufflers, despite what the alarmists might claim --- the readers are discriminating, I think, and while the hacks will always be with us, they will never dominate. However, the future does not belong to the borderline cases either; those writers who blind us all with literary skill but seemingly disdain their roots.

This is a time for the fusionists; for those who can weld writing talent of the highest order to the genre's endless possibilities, who can make their far worlds real and populate them with living people. It is time for writers who love both language and spaceships. And Kate Wilhelm, marvelous writer that she is, has never been one of those.

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EYES IN THE SKY

THE INVISIBLE COLLEGE

By Jacques Vallee

E. P. Dutton, 216 pp., \$9.95

Reviewed By Robert Anton Wilson

Being a Contactee myself, I am always curious about new Flying Saucer books, although most of them relate to serious science about as closely as a Ronald Reagan speech relates to an essay by Bertrand Russell, which is to say not at all. The whole subject is kitsch: Unintentional Low Camp. One can barely discuss the matter with a straight face, and if serious debate is somehow engaged, one expects it will be interrupted by the Three Stooges, if not by the egregious Reagan himself and his old co-star, Bozo the Chimpanzee.

Nonetheless, the Contactee experience is one of those dreadful human perennials, like political brawling and head colds in winter. No matter how many skeptics try to brush it under the rug or bury it in ridicule, the experience continues. It must be at least as common as flashes of ESP, clairvoyance, 'hauntings,' Oneness with God, memories of past 'incarnations,' incest, homosexuality or any of the other taboo things that have always happened in every human society and continued in ours even during the years when everybody was trained to pretend they weren't there.

The standard UFO book will probably sound as naive in twenty years (or in five...) as Freud's writings on sexuality already sound. Like Freud breathlessly announcing to the smug Victorians, "My God, infants do have sex drives" and "Holy Gosh, almost everybody has masturbated, maybe even the Pope," the UFO journalist bursts out, often in italics and reinforced by exclamation marks, "Gee Whillikers, sightings-confirmed-on-radar keep happening" and "Holy Cow, fellers, Close Contacts are still going on." One is tempted to ask, "So, what else is new?"

UFOs, today, are like domestic espionage by the C.I.A. was in the '60s: everybody knows about it except the Government and the Establishment press. Ask the first three people you meet on the street, and two at least will tell you, with great assurance, "Oh, they're alien space-ships, but the Government and the media are trying to cover it up."

All this is rather pathetic, because actually nobody knows any-

thing about "it" at all, not even the Contactees, who are scientifically as much in the dark as those who've only seen one of Them at such a great distance that it might have been a weather balloon, after all.

Jacques Vallee, with a Master's in astrophysics and a Ph.D. in cybernetics, comes on to this scene with a refreshing mixture of scientific skepticism, bold imagination and Gallic irony. THE INVISIBLE COLLEGE is unlike any other UFO book ever written. Dr. Vallee questions what everybody else takes for granted, doubts what everybody believes, drenches us with data that doesn't "fit" any of the theories of either the True Believers or the die-hard non-believers, and then offers a hypothesis of his own -- a hypothesis that is both plausible and maddeningly inconclusive.

The UFOs, Vallee proposes, are a control system. They monitor human behavior by reinforcing belief systems in a strategic and tactical way. To be even more blunt about it, they "shape" our behavior in precisely the same way that B.F. Skinner "shapes" the behavior of experimental animals in his laboratory.

Vallee is quite liberal about this. He even has a graph demonstrating that UFO/human contacts follow a cycle similar to that of a "schedule of reinforcement" in Skinnerian Behavior Mod.

More inclusively, Dr. Vallee relates UFOs to other forms of human contact with the Unknown -- the appearances of the "Blessed Virgin Mary" at Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima (which contained 43 parallels with modern UFO sightings, carefully enumerated for the reader in chart form); the encounter between Joseph Smith and the "angel", Moroni, which resulted in the Mormon Church; the dialogues between Dr. John Dee and several different "angels"; the Gnostic and Dionysian mystery-cults of ancient times; the "fairies" or "little people" of various cultures from Ireland to Tibet; and, by implication, all the territory of what used to be called "occultism" or, in religion, "miracles."

The entities which have interacted with humanity in all these cases, and in modern UFOlogy, are using a technology which allows them to manipulate the perceptions of the humansubject any way they wish. Their strategy remains constant, Vallee insists: the "revelation" given the Contactee is always one step beyond the current belief-system in the Contactee's society and



always includes an element of "de-liberate absurdity" to guarantee that it will be rejected by the more skeptical and "educated" classes. And, almost always, the Contactee has some "evidence" to prove that the experience was not "totally subjective." The evidence may vary from place to place and time to time (a gift for prophesy, a power of healing, a confirming radar sighting, etc.), but it only confirms that something has happened, not that the highly apocalyptic and deliberately absurd events described by the bedazzled and mind-blown Contactee happened.

In many cases, Vallee demonstrates, the Contactee was given assurance -- sometimes repeatedly, especially in mediumistic contacts -- that more evidence, of an irrefutable character, will soon be forthcoming, to convince the most bigoted non-believers. It never happens. Sometimes, as in the Uri Geller extravaganza, evidence is shown to one scientist (Dr. Pujarich, in that case) and then destroyed before another scientist can confirm it.

The Contactee is eventually isolated from mainstream society, but in most cases acquires a group of believers who quickly take on cult-like characteristics. (Some today are whispering that Geller is the Messiah...) These cults can grow to considerable sizes; indeed, if some of Dr. Vallee's deadpan understatements are taken to their logical conclusion, this may well be the origin, not just of Mormonism, but of all the major religions. Although modern Contacts blend in a lot of science-fiction with the standard ethical messages (peace, sharing, the unity of all living beings, etc.), the style of the Message is always apocalyptic.

By means of such Contact experi-

ences -- more in one century, less in another, but always escalating when vast social change is needed -- human behavior, human belief, human hopes have been manipulated, conditioned, shaped, all through history. "They" are our control system, the cybernetic feedback that keeps us within the lines of the grand DNA strategy for our planet.

This will seem extravagant to everybody, except those who have already had the shattering, ego-blasting, apocalyptic Contact with Higher Intelligence. It is to be expected that those who have had the experience will immediately divide into two groups: those who believed what they were told in these epistemological psycho-dramas, and who will therefore indignantly reject Dr. Vallee's cool and somewhat sinister analysis; and those who have retained some normal human rationality even after the experience, who will probably agree with Dr. John Lilly's enthusiastic verdict on the dust-jacket, "the first reasonable hypothesis about these phenomena that I have read."

To accept, at least provisionally, that "They" are a control system need not imply any infallibility on their part. The foxes are a control system, regulating goose population in an ecological sense, but the foxes remain primitive mammalian life-forms. Humanity has undoubtedly functioned as a control system on the rest of Earthian life-forms -- a domesticated ape bright enough to invent tools and redesign the environment more relentlessly than any beaver pack or ant colony -- but ecology is little but a horrified record of how often the human interventions in nature have menaced humanity itself. The UFOs, if they are part of the seamless web of an intelligent ocosphere, may still be, on their own, no more omniscient than the average fox or average human.

It would be premature, however, to accept any particular UFO absurdity as evidence that the control system has necessarily goofed. As Vallee shows with brilliant detail, the most nonsensical aspects of UFO/human communication are best described as meta-logic rather than illogic. Vallee's paradigm is the following dialogue (from a real Close Contact case):

UFO "humanoid": "What time is it?"
Human Contactee: "Two-thirty."
UFO: "You lie. It is four o'clock."

It was actually two-thirty. Why should the UFO ask the time if they knew it? Why should they lie about

it? Why accuse the human of lying? Why engage in such horse-play at all, when the human subject was capable of discovering the real time and discovering the pointlessness of the whole dialogue?

This is not illogic, Vallee argues, but a deliberate mind-fuck, entirely similar to the koans of the Zen Masters, the inexplicable jokes of the Sufis, the time-warps and time-scrambles of fairy-lore in the Celtic magick tradition. Another Contactee was given a version of this basic epistemological hoofbeats by being taken "Aboard" a "Ship" where he was manipulated into "accidentally" seeing a clock with no hands on it.

Many Contactees suffer partial amnesia. Others stop their story at one point and say, "They made me promise not to tell the next part," and won't tell it. Another group mention something that they themselves, without orders from the UFO, decided not to tell to other humans.

Vallee recognizes meta-logic in all such blank-outs: what is "concealed" is that which the current reality-map will not find tolerable. Vallee neglects to note the parallel with persons who have survived prolonged isolation, all of whom have experiences similar to traditional mystic illumination and to UFO "Contact" phenomena. Many isolate refuse to talk at all, or talk very little, during the week or two weeks after rescue. Often, they explain later that they sensed that everything they had to say would sound "insane" to normal socially-conditioned humans.

The plain fact is that social consensus-reality (as Dr. Lilly calls it) is maintained for each of us entirely by continuous reinforcement through association with other conditioned subjects molded by the same social imprints. A micro-dot of LSD, ten days in a closet, or a few shamanic or yogic exercises, and the whole charade collapses, at least temporarily: a dozen, a thousand, alternate "realities" appear, each as "real" as the others and some of them indisputably more "real" than the social "reality." Nobody but a totally conditioned robot, for instance, would respond lustfully to green pieces of paper, blessed by the Federal Reserve and called "money", as the "sane, normal" citizen does.

If the Reality Game is imposed by social conditioning, and if the UFOs are part of an ecological control system monitoring slow-to-abrupt changes in that Reality, we still want to know, Who or What are

They?

Vallee is singularly unhelpful with this, the ultimate, question. He approaches his climax with further questions, rather than with answers: "I would like to step outside the conditioning maze and see what makes it tick. I wonder what I would find. Perhaps a terrible superhuman monstrosity the very contemplation of which would make a man insane? Perhaps a solemn gathering of wise men? Or the maddening simplicity of unattended clockwork?"

Perhaps we can do a little better than that.

The parties-of-the-second-part in Contactee experiences (i.e. Them) are, at minimum, versatile, inventive and highly deceptive. They talked a high grade of philosophy with Dr. John Lilly, and an equally high grade of ethics with G. I. Gurdjieff. They enable Uri Geller to bend metal, jam geiger counters, and perform similar Grade B science-fiction stunts. They warp time, bestow "wild talents" of a psionic nature on favored Contactees, and remain, at each step of human cultural evolution, one step in technology ahead of us, at least.

The fact that their behavior, when analyzed by Dr. Vallee with the assistance of computers, reveals a pattern of cybernetic control may be interpreted to mean that Dr. Vallee, like Uri Geller, is getting what his mind is prepared to "get." Vallee, a cybernetics expert, finds a control system. Geller, who hates to read, gets exactly the kind of moral preachments and psionic "miracles" featured in Universal Studios kid-oriented sci-fi films widely distributed throughout the world when Geller was a child. Those who are ready for Little Green Men get LGMs in their Contact experiences. Over a hundred Contactees by now have reported sexual intercourse with beautiful space-women. The Catholics get a new appearance of the Virgin, when it is necessary to stir them up.

The highest mystics, if we care to consider them as ESP Contactees, "get" experiences of Cosmic Love, usually, and often of Omniscient Wisdom. It is important to note that other very high mystics have "gotten" Cosmic Indifference. (Something for everybody?)

The Control System, if we accept Dr. Vallee's metaphor, is also programmed with the persona of an Ideal Parent, when that is required. Indeed, the Contactees who come back ranting about an "Almighty Father,"

are, historically, the single largest group -- evidently because the search for an Almighty Father is a deep human compulsion, as Freud noted. Right behind them are the second largest group, raving about the ideal female, sexy or maternal or both, as the case may be.

Dr. Vallee is well enough read in the occult to note that the "angels" of Dr. Dee in the 17th Century and Aleister Crowley in the early 20th had a lot in common with each other and with UFO "humanoids." He even notes that AFFA, the extraterrestrial from "Uranus" who communicated with two naval intelligence officers in a particularly good mediumistic contact (and kindly provided a "space-ship" sighting afterward, for "objective" verification) bears a name, which in Dr. Dee's "angelic" language means "Nothing." One senses adumbrations of the God-who-is-Nothing in Cabala and St. Dionysius, the Void of Tibetan and Zen Buddhism.

Vallee should have gone further and dug into HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM by Ida Craddock, which was published, under the thin pen-name "Ida C." around the turn of this century. Ms. Craddock had a love affair with an "angel" that lasted over twenty years. Her account of this extraordinary erotic experience later fell into the hands of a Dr. Theodore Schroder, who re-published it with a long introduction by himself, explaining her "delusion" as a classic case of sexuality sublimating into religious mania. Aleister Crowley, who knew a lot more about "angels" than Dr. Schroder, reviewed the book and pronounced that Dr. S didn't know anything about angelology. As the foremost expert on angelology and demonology of our time, Crowley declared, in brief, that Ms. Craddock's heavenly lover was real.

A cosmic father to the celebrated Nazarene, a Control System to Dr. Vallee, a clown from the cosmic circus to Discordians, a Little Green Man to a Mississippi farmer or an Irish peasant of the 9th Century, a super-sex-partner to somebody else ... We are obviously dealing with a damned good touring magickal theatre, to say the least.

To paraphrase biologist J.B.S. Haldane, "The universe (including the UFOs) may be, not only stranger than we think, but stranger than we can think." To paraphrase myself, "The universe (including the UFOs) may be, not only more intelligent than we think, but more intelligent than we can think." And to paraphrase Joanna Leary paraphrasing both Dr. Haldane and me, "The uni-

verse (including the UFOs) may be, not only more erotic than we think, but more erotic than we can think." Amen.

But the meat of Dr. Vallee's book is not just in opening this very fruitful line of speculation; it is in the detailed examination of what he calls Contacts of the 7th degree of strangeness. Here, in the raw data of humans confronted by that which transcends their notions of "reality," is the evidence which indicates that theories as b-lud as Vallee's (and maybe even as bold as my extrapolations from Vallee) are very rough sketches of what the ultimate explanation will be.

I leave you with my own favorite of Dr. Vallee's 7th degree Contacts. Two men were driving in a car. Suddenly, time warped and they were out of the car and it was parked; they were, in fact, standing behind it. One of them "remembered" a classic UFO contact during the time warp, in which he had been taken aboard and experimented upon. He had a cut on his arm, where the UFO "people" had taken a skin sample. The other man "remembered" only a large bus pulling up behind them, and no UFO. Neither of them "remembered" atopping the car and getting out.

The cut on the arm was quite real when examined by police, doctors and UFO investigators later. The rest is the standard blend of science-fiction, absurdity and contradiction that they are currently using in their latest campaign to modify human belief and behavior. The incident happened in 1971.



A SHORT ONE FOR THE BOYS IN THE BACK ROOM

By BARRY N. MALZBERG

22 January, 1976

'Dear Dick;

I have sold my sixth (and probably last) collection, DOWN HERE IN THE DREAM QUARTER and am presently writing the general intro & story forewords and so on. Here is the intro which you are quite welcome to publish (and you will publish first; the book is scheduled for 3/77) and which, in fact, I hope you will.

Barry'

About a year ago, looking for another way to contend with the famous and well-known midlife crisis I took to going to the local library and taking out at random authors' biographies. Ross and Tom and John and Ernest and James and John again and Sinclair; like that. It was interesting at the start but the reason that I have returned to the Calais coupe and 1952 ASFs for bedtime reading can best be summarized by what I told my wife after biography number nine or perhaps ten, "It's the same book, it's the same life. Different names, different dates, maybe different lifestyles but oh my God it's on a book about all these people. Childhood rejection, early struggles, itinerant employment, first publication, first wife, initial success, social drinking, second wife, huge success, private drinking, blue period, green period, paranoia, sullenness, withdrawal, separation, burnout, bottle, collapse, oblivion. This is not," I concluded, "recreational reading."

Country squire John (NEW YORKER John) and vigorous Ernest; witty Thurber and Kaufman and spectacular Ross and Tom, it was all the same book and these, by all the saints of heaven, were the biggies, the icons, the most successful of their time. If it was one book for all of them, how much shorter and more dismal a book for people like your faithful undersigned, genre writers that is to say, writers who - let us be honest about this - may possess skills, some of them, to the level of the best of their generation but who have little chance to be subjects of biography

ies; writers who do their work for the popular markets in the context of entertainment and are thus limned by the present? One of the lesser insights of my venture into the basement of the library was that for all of us it is pretty much the same although genre writers are forced, occasionally, to make sauterne or scuffling affairs serve the function of scotch and faithful wife #3.

Therefore, therefore, in this introduction to this sixth and possibly last of my short-story collections (there may be more but they will include work no later than this in point of time since I have ceased like a drunk pounding helplessly at a luncheonette window in the cold to write science fiction) let me spare the reader, gentle and ungentle alike. I would locate myself, standard biography-wise, somewhere between the Blue Period and the Green but now and then at 5 a.m. I think about the Burnout while not disremembering the Early Achievements. Put me roughly in midlife, in mid-career, at that point where most male American writers give up and find something else to do while a stubborn and admirable few break through to their best work. Leave precise placement to the biographers who, if my luck holds, will neglect to get at me.

I thought I would talk a bit instead about the Early Struggles. Periods blue and green appear differently to every writer (some even call them yellow) whereas Early Struggles are more or less the same and of more universal appeal. How did I get started writing this stuff, anyway? What brought me into the room? What did I think I was getting into and, hey, if so much of your stuff appears to be anti-science fictional, anti-technological anyway why did you come in to bother us? Why didn't you go into the goddamned PARTISAN REVIEW or maybe men's magazines?

Why, indeed? More and more I think about this; if one is ever going to become contemplative in a productive way, midlife or midcareer is the proper time. It is only in the past year that I have, as a matter of fact, tried to evaluate my career and its origins in any systematized way. I was writing so fast, struggling so hard, moving on so quickly that for many years I literally had no time to think. (Now I may have too much.) I sold my first science fiction story on January 11, 1967 and my first science fiction novel about two years later by which time I had sold another dozen short stories.

(c) 1976 by Barry N. Malzberg.

By 1972 I had sold thirteen science fiction novels and about eighty short stories; by the end of 1974 I had sold twenty-four and in excess of a hundred-and-fifty. Still not ten years from that first sale I have produced a body of work which quantitatively (quality judgments are not within my province) will compare, I think, to the most prolific writers in a genre whose history has been filled with prolificity; this is a field historically so ill-paying that one had to write a great deal to make even a modest living and a year's output by an industrious and disciplined professional hereabouts would be a respectable career by the standards of the academy, and no wonder. Even in this company, however, I have been unusually prolific. I have, you see, been so damned busy that for a long time it never occurred to me to ask myself what I was doing here.

What the hell? I was just here to try and sell a few literary short stories, that was all, except that I got lucky and found that I had a feeling for the stuff and could do novel length too and from then on it was just a matter of going as far as my productivity and talent would take me. I never intended to make a career as an sf writer; back in 1965 Christopher Anvil or R.C Fitzpatrick looked pretty good to me by career standards. Sell a few short stories a year, make a few hundred dollars, get my name in print, buy a kind of marginal recognition. Every success, every step was a bit of a surprise. I never expected to be a major science fiction writer let alone the figure I have become. (Which if not "major" is certainly that in terms of visibility as best symbol of a certain kind of writing in my field in my country just as J.G. Ballard occupies the same role in England.) Don't bother your modest correspondent, folks: he just found that he could first take and then not resist the next step and the next...

My uncle died a successful man of cancer at the age of 63 many years ago. I think his sister was quite right in saying that what killed him was not the tension, not the work, not the competition but ambition, that it is ambition which is the undoing of many of us. Wanting to be the new Christopher Anvil was fine, no harm in it; wanting to sell a novel for the sake of selling a single novel wasn't fatal either...but step by step by rung ambition was going with me, wallowing me in the behind

and finally catching up in 1971 or so and I think it is possible to say that if my career as a science fiction writer is over today it is a career whose epitaph must read **KILLED BY AMBITION: HE WANTED TO CHANGE THE FIELD AND MAKE IT ANEW.** And all of it, seen in retrospect a fine inevitability. It could have been no other way. Sorrow, sorrow. Still the work is done and some of it has value.

How did I get here? I think I was asking. Well, I used to read a lot of this stuff in prepubesence. Every science fiction writer who ever was until, say, about 1970 (when for other reasons the game changed; many of the newer writers are transplanted litterateurs who discovered the field out of the necessity to find some living market for fiction). It is the one generality which for almost fifty years bound together all of us, ladies and gents, pulp writers and artistes, good and bad alike: we had all read it at a certain stage of life when it intersected crucially with our own difficult perceptions of helplessness* and had made it part of the psychic landscape. Most science fiction writers go right on reading it, moving in their later teens to their attempts to reproduce, first stumbling, later (which may take very little time) not so stumbling and finally successful until the transition from reader to writer looks in retrospect merely as an inevitable rite of passage. Indeed, most of the wellknown science fiction writers of the generation right up to mine had a record of published correspondence in the magazines, articles in the fan magazines, attendance at conventions...they fell into the field at pubescence and in one sense never got out. I do not mean this pejoratively.

A far greater percentage do. Get out that is to say. It would be ridiculous to contend that evvert prepubescent who reads science fiction moves on to try and write it; as a matter of fact, only an insignificant fraction do. The great majority, perhaps upwards of ninety percent, put science fiction away in middle to late adolescence when they find more accessible outlets for their feelings of helplessness and do not read it or read it only occasionally for the rest of their lives. A certain

*effortlessly the famous response to a questionnaire puts it: "the golden age of science fiction is thirteen."

CHOOSE, DR. FAUSTUS!
THE NOBEL PRIZE OR
SCORES OF BEAUTIFUL
GROUPIES!



number return and become heavy readers of it again in their twenties... but I would contend that I am the only member of this large group who ever came back to be a writer let alone have a significant career in the genre.

Because I did give it up of course. Almost completely. In fact I denied science fiction in my later teens the way certain well-known professionals now deny their own published correspondence in fan magazines, their activities at conventions. Between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five I cannot remember ever reading a science fiction novel. Oh, maybe MORE THAN HUMAN, THE STARS MY DESTINATION, GLADIATOR-AT-LAW but, uh, those weren't really science fiction, they were, um, good. Science fiction was escapist stuff for kids and kiddish adults; I did not even consider science fiction writers to be writers, not real, writer-type writers anyway.* Anybody who a twelve-year-old Malzberg could believe in was obviously no friend of mine.

How dark my sin; dark, darker than desire. At twenty-five I was a burnt-out case, the author of about a million unpublished words, about 100,000 of them (I felt then and agree now) of some literary

*I learned far better of course and were this not in the confessional mode I would never have put this down. But I do so to point out to my most loathing critics that they cannot possibly do to me what have versions of my earlier self or, as my mother once pointed out citing a Russian proverb, "A hundred Cossacks on their horses cannot hurt you as you can hurt yourself."

quality. The HUDSON REVIEW thought I was promising but not quite right for them, THE ATLANTIC took a special interest in my manuscripts but not that special. ESQUIRE would appreciate my enclosing a stamped self-addressed envelope in the future and KENYON was particularly sorry to send back work of high literary quality which, nevertheless, the volume of submissions forced them to do.

I think I would have given up. (And how I wish in the 5 a.m. over and over that I had!) But I went job hunting and the first job offered was as an employee of a large literary agency and I was in no spirit to turn down anything in June of 1965 and after hanging around the agency just a bit it occurred to me that Christopher Anvil and Mack Reynolds didn't have it so bad after all. They didn't have to contend with the Guggenheim committee much less the editorial board of the HUDSON REVIEW for one thing and for another they were knocking down four cents a word on acceptance as opposed to two and a half cents a word (if that) on publication. Burnt-out cases, if they do not go for the bottle, inevitably go for the money. (Read the literary biographies for verification.) "I used to read this stuff," I thought, "I know I have a feeling for it; maybe I can do it again."

I tried. What did I have to lose? (My virginity if that is the word I am looking for was already gone; I sold my first story to a tenth-rate men's magazine on 11/19/65, I remember almost nothing about it except that it dealt with a prostitute who had, save me, "round orgasms".) My first piece, written in 12/65 was a murky and awful three thousand worder called "Full Circle", something about a apocalypse which Fred Pohl failed to receive and which my growing market sense told me almost immediately was not at all saleable. My second, whose title falls from memory, written three months later had to do with modern social chaos as being caused by disruptive alien patrol; Campbell rejected that and although my suspicion of JWC was already fully formed - I had been catching up frantically on the field during all this time you see - I saw his point as well. My third sf piece, written in September was a parody of a round dozen of the greats which I could tell on rereading could not possibly be offered; my fourth, a pastiche of the Kuttner Gallegher stories was written in 11/66 and although Campbell rejected it it is the on-

ly one of the early stories of which I am actually slightly fond; I caught Gallegher's drunken lunacy and the narcissism of Joe the Can Opener if only by clumsily welding them to a standard EQMM-type plot. Campbell told my agent he didn't think I was the equal of Hank Kuttner; I hadn't thought then (or now) that I ever pretended to be.

In 12/66 I wrote in one sitting in circumstances explained elsewhere a 1200-word piece "We're coming Through the Windows" framed in an epistolary fashion to Fred Pohl and submitted immediately to him. My agent's phone call on 1/11/67 telling me that Pohl was buying the piece for \$36.00 gave me and I know my wife and children are listening and I know they will understand,



the single happiest moment of my life. During the next nine months I was still trying to find the range in a sequence of short shorts, one or two of which I sold in years following, all of which are negligible and forgotten.

Then, in August of 1967, sitting in the living room of our apartment at 102 West 75th Street, breathing in great draughts of reeking Amsterdam and Columbus Avenue air while trying to figure out a mindless plot I could try for AFHM I was stricken with an inspiration. In my trunk I had a 12,000 word piece, "Shoe a Troop of Horse" about an endless war in an ambiguous time fought for no reason. (People later took it to be about Vietnam and it became about as famous as any story in our little category can be but I did not have Vietnam at all in mind when I wrote the story in 2/65. I didn't even know at that time what a "teach-in" was except it was something that no proper writer should be attending.

Silence, exile, cunning.) Why not give it a science fictional title and see if I could sneak it through? It had come as close to selling the literary markets as anything I had written when I wanted to be a literary writer; maybe the ambiguity would appear, to a science fiction editor, as extrapolation.

I was, by that time, twenty-eight years old and not without a certain low cunning. I retitled the story "Final War", retyped the first page and sent it off to Campbell who promptly rejected it with a form slip. Fred Pohl turned it back as non-science-fiction (Fred Pohl was no fool) but said that it reinforced his feeling about the writer's talent and he wanted to be kept on the list. (What list he did not specify.) Damon Knight for ORBIT thought it a great literary accomplishment but entirely out of category. Edward L. Ferman, with his father, Joseph Wolfe, took it on 10/1/67 for FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION and paid me \$250.00 and changed my life. Even before it was published I sold a second literary story, "Death To the Keeper" to them and one piece to Harry Harrison at AMAZING. "Final War" was published in March, 1968 and subsequently was anthologized seven times in the U.S. alone and was the basis of my first book sale, a collection to Ace.

I was on my way. Where I would not know for several years and why I am not sure I know even now...but I was on my way.

JANUARY 21, 1976: 10:30 p.m. Six inches of snow on the ground. Two million published words of science fiction on the shelves around me. Down here; down here in the dream quarter.

New Jersey: January 1976



THE TRAGICOMIC CRITIC: A GLIMPSE OF BARRY MALZBERG

A COMMENTARY/REVIEW OF---

BEYOND APOLLO
Pocket Books 77687, 95¢ (1974)

HEROVIT'S WORLD
Pocket Books 77753, 95¢ (1974)

GALAXIES
Pyramid Books (1975)

BY TERRENCE M. GREEN

These three Malzberg books (BEYOND APOLLO, HEROVIT'S WORLD, and

GALAXIES) aren't really Science Fiction. They're about science fiction. Possibly they might fit into an area we could hesitantly term "nouveau criticism", or "metaphorical criticism" of the field; but I suspect such terms are probably unfairly delimiting to both Malzberg and his concerns. And as for calling the books "SF novels", this, too, does scant justice to them, and perhaps even misrepresents them to the unwary reader/buyer.

There's not much else quite like them in the field of SF publishing (nothing that comes to mind), and for this reason -- as well as several others -- they should be carefully scrutinized. They are also about us -- you, me, the SF reader, writer, publisher, editor, et al. -- and should concern us accordingly. Dismissal of and impatience with Malzberg cannot suffice for us. We need to consider and evaluate seriously, for in the midst of the Malzberg writing maelstrom, there is a kernel of Significant Comment. It is worth eliciting for its own sake.

If you are unfamiliar with Malzberg -- a man who has written so damn much -- and want to attempt to grasp the heart of his Critique, given in his own inimitable method, I suggest that the three books mentioned at the beginning constitute a solid triangle of different representative approaches. They may be all we need to read of his.

To start, BEYOND APOLLO, which first appeared in 1972, is Malzberg's questioning of some of the basic tenets of science fiction. The real question here is not what man will find on Venus, or even what he did find on Venus; the real issue is an extension of the basic doubt surrounding the space programme at the time: why go to Venus at all? And by further extension -- if there's no real reason to go to Venus, then why write make-believe novels about going to Venus? Why make your characters go to Venus? In other words -- what can be the real value of placing fictional characters in a traditional science fiction setting? What advantages can there be? The only damn reason Malzberg can come up with appears in ch. 60, after his characters search for the True Reason that they are going:

Everything is blind chance, happenstance, occurrence; in an infinite universe anything can happen. After the fact we find reasons. We're going to Venus

because the dice came up.
(p. 141)

In going "beyond apollo", Malzberg is attempting to take us beyond the realm of traditional science fiction, especially the science fiction rooted so firmly in the concerns of outer space, and in the concerns of science and ideas; he is approaching the notion in this book that SF must break out of its time-honored conventions, and concern itself with inner space and people, as does all literature ultimately. The obsession with outer space, he seems to be telling us via metaphor here, is mere distraction, and quite unnecessary -- in fact, often boring.

Consider HEROVIT'S WORLD now. Here Malzberg becomes more direct in his comments about SF and the microcosm that is the SF world. It has the advantage over the other two books in that Malzberg's real strength is humor. Here is his true modus operandi. At points, this is a perceptive and funny book about the life of an SF writer -- by extension, again, the lives of all SF writers, and as a comic generalization, about the state of traditional current commercial SF in the modern world of writing and of letters.

Hidden beneath the veneer of a sort of "story", Malzberg's real subject matter is the conservative and myopic tendencies of SF writers, editors and fans. Comments about SF characterization ("Introspection would hold back the plot..." -p. 12) and how the fictional persona of the novel (a writer) cannot take his characters seriously any more (p. 15) are part of the overview. As a writer, Malzberg apparently can drum up no sympathy for a traditional SF character, and cannot, thus, read it any longer. One "grows out of" traditional SF, to mature considerations of Man as he is now.

In the book, the writer, in his schizophrenic state, is talking with himself, with his pseudonym --

Your trouble is that you've been dealing with galaxies and aliens and universal problems for so long that you've lost touch with the basics. Like saving your own ass instead of Mack Miller's. (p. 88)

The writer's life, being an analogue of a "real" life -- in that it is complex, confusing, incoherent and small -- is pitted against the life of the Captain of the Survey Team (Mack Miller) in the novel

Malzberg's persona is writing, and Mack Miller's life becomes irrelevant to both writer and reader since it is so simplified and unreal. The writer in the Malzberg book, upon comparing the incredible absurdity and confusion of his own life with that of Mack Miller's easily plotted life and smooth decisions, issues the constant refrain "Mack Miller would not have to take this shit."

In other words, we are evading the issues of writing, of literature, of life, by proliferating the traditional Campbell-type SF and the Mack Millers who head Intergalactic Survey Teams. The writer, Malzberg suggests in a dramatic presentation in the book, can compare in such cases to the prostitute who demands her "advance" upon submitting her "plot outline" to a potential customer. Thus, writing such SF is like turning a trick.

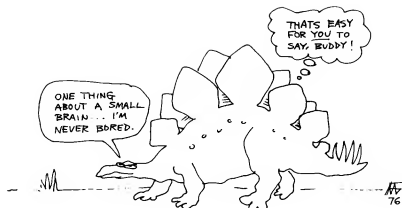
GALAXIES, Malzberg's "notes toward an SF novel", packaged as a traditional space opera, is a perfect example of the mass commercialism of the SF "package" to its "consumers". Caveat emptor. For I think Malzberg (or his publisher) could be accused of taking the trick's money and leaving via the bathroom window. The unwary buyer who wants to read about "space pilot, beautiful Lena Thomas", "tachyonic drive", "black holes", "twenty-five billion miles of hyperspace" etc., etc., will be sorely disappointed. Here, Malzberg is "putting on" not only the reader, as he has done in previous books, but the entire SF world.

But he has purpose. It's another of his ways of saying, "Hey! Lookit you guys! Lookit what you like to read! Isn't it silly? Why don't we all grow up? Why doesn't SF do what it can do instead of being a whore's product!"

So you resent this? Well you might. For a novel it isn't. And you were led to believe it would be when you paid your buck and a quarter. But Malzberg sneaks in with a powerful left jab, and shakes you after he gets your attention. Maybe he figures it's the only way to reach a certain kind of reader, a reader who does not read Criticism, or Learned Treatises re Literature. Who knows? Maybe it works.

The message is the same as in the other two books mentioned. Why deal with black holes in space in fiction? "My personal life is my black hole," he asserts on p. 14.

A couple more excerpts --



LETTER FROM ROBERT BLOCH

May 13, 1976

'Maybe it's my mood of the moment, but I find SFR #17 to be a bit on the sombre side and more pedantic than antic. I admit a tendency to be put off by reviews which begin, "I liked DHALGREN, but for the life of me I couldn't give you a very coherent statement why" --- but then this issue seems filled with likes and dislikes none too coherently expressed. Perhaps it's just that I tend to take a dim view of analytical criticism and the material it addresses its anal or lyrical talents to. Nobody ever had to "explain" the work of Mark Twain to me, or Hemingway, Rabalais, Tolstol, Mann, or others whose efforts have endured. And I simply refuse to accept obfuscation as profundity. Anybody can put his hands in his pockets and massage his ego, but the typewriter should not be used for auto-erotic purposes---by either writer or critic---under the delusion that the true creation is a product of said same. Yours was the best writing in the issue---because you communicated.'

'Doctors feared, and still fear, losing their privileges to grant or withhold drugs. They must prove to themselves and to their patients that they use that power solely for the benefit and protection of the public. To prescribe something pleasurable might reduce their status to something akin to that of a beautician or a wine merchant, catering to whims, not needs. Jealous of their authority, alarmed by the hedonism that is inherent in cocaine use, the medical profession ignored the possible therapeutic uses of coco and cocaine, and assented to their being prohibited.'

---Norman E. Zinberg
NEW YORK REVIEW, Oct. 30,
1975.

INTERIOR ART
TIM KIRK 2,3,12,30,38,42,45,48
VIC KOSTRIKIN 4,
RANDY MOHR 6,32
ALEXIS GILLILAND 7,9,10,11,14,16,21,
24,35,41,47
WILLIAM ROTSLSER 8
GRANT CANFIELD 13,40
JACK GAUGHAN 18
JIM MCQUADE 20,22,33,36
MIKE GILBERT 24,25,26,27
29,34,37,43



and probably in great measure, true

But it is interesting only in small doses, or in quite humorous trappings. Thus, the short 'chapter' technique is the only possible method for such an attempt, as is the short book length; and of the three books mentioned, the most memorable, and probably the most successful at doing what Malzberg set out to do, is HEROVIT'S WORLD. Its humor sustains it. It is a very funny book, taken properly. Such visions as Malzberg has about SF must be injected with liberal doses of humor, else they threaten to become boring, incoherent diatribes.

I would venture to say that all who are interested in the current state of SF, or who enjoy controversial or pointed commentary on the field, could add these three volumes to their critical library. Certainly they belong on the shelf with SF: THE OTHER SIDE OF REALISM, IN SEARCH OF WONDER, BILLION YEAR SPREE, NEW WORLDS FOR OLD, THE ISSUE AT HAND, ALTERNATE WORLDS, etc., if they belong anywhere. For they are Alternatives to traditional criticism of the field, just as Malzberg suggests Alternatives to traditional approaches to SF.

This is with the possible exception of HEROVIT'S WORLD. It's a funny book (novel?) in its own right. Malzberg should do more like it.

Herovit, looking at his infant daughter, muses --

Surely this cannot be the proper environment in which the child should grow. Before she can even articulate, she will have conceived the most utter loathing for science fiction and science fiction writers. (p. 52)

THE END

"Why does everything have to do with the destruction of the universe?" she says again. "Can't you just deal with people, can't you understand there are people here?" (p. 81)

-- and re the insertion of tracts of scientific detail into SF stories to make the story proceed "logically":

...readers of this genre expect to be bored; in fact they are seeking boredom as a means of release from too much self-confrontation. (p.31)

Malzberg, in all these works, is saying that Earth is an alien planet, and other people are aliens. These are (or should be) our concerns as writers, and discriminating readers should recognize this; without reader recognition of this, the effort is foredoomed. In fact, it is implied that the effort is Sisyphus-like anyway, for at the end of HEROVIT'S WORLD, Mack Miller, Intergalactic Surveyman, does go on. He is --

rising again, triumphant and reborn, howling out his defiance over a thousand tenements as the alien sun rises and the alien sun sets and all of it begins again, but in some other place or time. (p. 159)

In conclusion, I submit that Malzberg is important to science fiction -- as a commentator, not as a novelist. Perhaps the error of his readers is to assume that he writes novels; perhaps Malzberg is at fault for being so indirect and playful. But they are not novels, nor are they truly meant to be. They are different types of experiments in writing speculatively about the field of SF. What he has to say is interesting, perceptive,

YES, BUT HOW MUCH DO THEY WEIGH?

GREMLINS GO HOME

By Gordon R. Dickson and Ben Bova
Illustrated By Kelly Freas
St. Martin's Press, \$6.50

Reviewed By Paul McGuire

When a Juvenile novel is well written the term is used not as a warning to adults but to tell them their children will enjoy the book, too.

Dickson and Bova have written a highly entertaining fantasy for fans of any age. The book features many illustrations which rank among Freas' best and equal the story for charm, humor and invention.

The story concerns a lonely young boy, Rolf, who feels rejected by his parents. The boy's father is in charge of a Mars rocket shot from Cake Kennedy, and Rolf's mother is busy caring for a new baby.

Rolf and his proper English dog, Mr. Sheperton, embark on an adventure assisting a band of gremlins. Baneen, the leprechaun-like being who gave Rolf the power to see gremlins and talk not only to them but animals as well, is a delightful rogue. Despite Mr. Sheperton's objections, Rolf's friend Rita is added to the gremlins' plot to hitch a ride home on the Mars rocket.

In order to learn the gremlins' secret Rolf must learn about himself. After he matures enough to "solve" the problem a thrilling race against time and a breathtaking rescue must still take place before there can be the traditional happy ending.

This tongue-in-cheek youthful adventure is optimistic, unpretentious fun. Recommended.

HARLAN'S DISCOVERY AT THE PYRAMID

STORMTRACK

By James Sutherland
Pyramid Books, 95¢
The Harlan Ellison Discovery Series, #1.

Reviewed By Buzz Dixon

According to Theodore Sturgeon, 95% of stf is crap. This book is of the remaining 10%.

STORMTRACK isn't great, but it is well worth reading; one of those rare Juveniles worthy of adult con-

sideration.

James Sutherland needs practice, but if this first novel is his starting point I think he'll be one of the better writers of the late 70s and 80s. There are lapses in logic, sketchy writing, and scenes that don't work, yet on the whole STORMTRACK is a good, gripping book. In the hands of a lesser writer the surprise ending would be *deus ex machina*. Sutherland drops clues masterfully throughout but not enough to reveal the plot twist. By subtly weaving in clues as off-handed remarks and seemingly insignificant background detail, Sutherland sets the stage for his climax.

This is the kind of book to give a 13-year-old to turn him on to stf. You could do worse; 90% worse.

A LETTER FROM R. A. LAFFERTY

IMAGINE MY SURPRISE...

May 24, 1976

'Dear Richard:

I did not write nor send to you the verses that have been published under my name in #17 of SFR. No harm done, except they aren't very good.

'A little suspicion about the rest of the issue then, which quickly turns into a big suspicion. Here is a flock of Bright and Shining (hereafter referred to as the b-and-esses) Names attached to letters and reviews and comments. But much of the stuff is of thinner quality than could be expected of real b-and-esses. Have the b-and-esses been under-dealt and under-cut? Is there a Shadow Incompetency grinding these things out and slipping them in under the b-and-s names? Please investigate, unless you yourself have been under-dealt and substituted, in which case don't bother.'

((We have been hoaxed! Rather neatly, too. Somewhere in the readership there is a small, cunning mind doing chortling loop-de-loops. And no doubt plotting its next escapade. Listen, whoever-you-are, do it to ALGOL next, hmm? Or better yet, take your tiny, weak ego (which so needs this kind of propping up to survive), your half-sized wits, your mal-formed sense of humor, and stuff them up your arse with an awl. The resulting infection should finish you off.))

FIRST YOU PUT YOUR LEFT FOOT

NOTES TO A SCIENCE FICTION WRITER

By Ben Bova
Scribners, \$6.95

Reviewed by Paul McGuire

This book is comparable to a college class prefaced with the phrase "Introduction to" or "General Principles of". As such, it succeeds admirably. The information is clear and the presentation entertaining. Much of the credit for its success goes to the structuring of the lectures.

Mr. Bova divides the theory of story writing into four main aspects. They are Character, Background, Conflict, and Plot. For each he gives general rules and techniques in a section subtitled Theory. After each "Theory" there follows a reprint of one of Mr. Bova's stories. The fiction is used as an example for the next section subtitled Practice. The organiza-



tion furnishes the reader with a chance to look into a story detached enough to see where and how it works.

It is primarily a lay text aimed at those who know little or nothing of the subject, and thus is not as informative as a few others. Mr. Bova states that he wrote the book in the self-defensive hope that the quality of the slushpile he must read each work day will improve. This book should be read by anyone who intends mailing off a story. Readers who have ever been interested or simply curious about writing fiction should also enjoy it.

The stories used as examples are "Fifteen Miles," "Men of Good Will," "Stars Won't You Hide Me?" and "The Shining Ones."

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is available in microform from:

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300 N. Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor MI 48106

THE GIMLET EYE

COMMENTARY ON SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY ART

BY JON GUSTAFSON

I will have to admit that it did feel somewhat strange to receive a copy of SFR that didn't have my column in it. However, the feeling quickly passed and here I am again. Ah, it's good to be back.

I have considered myself lucky in the past year and a half. Not only have I been doing the thing I've wanted to do for years, but I've also had the opportunity to meet and correspond with many of the people I've admired for years. I'd like to share with you a few excerpts from some letters I have received in the past several months.

The first is from Craig Anderson, a young and very talented artist from California, and one destined to become well-known in fandom. He says, "Esthetically, sf art is important; it assumes a role having greater impact and visual value than does art in other realms of literature. Let's face it head on: because sf and fantasy deal with concepts beyond those usually encountered by Joe Average Reader, the need is there for some kind of visualization of the story being illustrated. We fans are used to sf—we revel in the stuff, considering it the only kind of literature that really says anything. For us, art becomes an enhancement of the story, for the uninitiated, it is the story: it helps the newcomer to see what we already perceive. Good art can attract the new reader to sf. Even a marginally putrid cover job can have a great impact upon the whole of sf, turning off many who might grab the mag and read the stuff and like it enough to continue reading it. Cover art is the 'grabber' for those who don't read sf with regularity. If good cover work wasn't necessary, all the mags would be listing their table of contents on the cover with no art at all." Excellent points, Craig; I agree about one hunnert percent.



CELLS TORN, ZIRA-TONE
RIPPED, HOSES CUT, AIR-
BRUSH COMPRESSOR SMASHED,
BRISTLES BENT, CROW-QUILLS
SQUASHED, NO DOUBT
THE WORK OF AN ARTERIC!

Without the cover illos, there isn't even a clue as to what's in a mag or book; this is one of the reasons cover art is such an important part of sf. Without cover art on books, we'd have to depend on the publisher's blurb to find out what is in it, and (place tongue firmly in cheek) we all know how accurate those are. It seems particularly important to have good cover illustrations where new authors are concerned. Established authors like Heinlein, Delany, Asimov, and Clarke can sell books regardless of what the cover looks like, but new authors need the assistance of good cover illos to help them sell books (after all, that's the name of the game).

Craig makes another very good observation in his letter, saying, "...it is idiotic to restrict artwork to artists who reside only in the eastern half of the U.S. While an art major at San Jose State, I saw and worked with many people who would make fantastic sf artists; they will never get the chance because they live 'out here'. They're not illustrating for the field for the same reason I'm not: we're out here on the west coast. The old saw that the artist has to be available for consultation with the art director restricts the sf field abominably. In view of some of the covers displayed recently, either some of the magazines have no art director to consult with the artist, or the director's taste is pure dreck. I refuse to believe that with the experience and knowledge that sf editors are supposed to possess, they are unable to create a workable plan for using the talented no matter what their location."

Craig is right here but he does not go quite far enough, for it is

not only the mags who don't use the west coast artists (or midwest artists, or southern artists, or...), but also many of the paperback publishers. The field could use the influx of new blood and perhaps the competition would force the established artists to do even better work.

I have been very fortunate in having a steady correspondence with one of the foremost sf illustrators of our time, Jack Gaughan. We've discussed many things, sf illustration (naturally) high among them, and in a recent letter he said some things, I felt were very important to the understanding of illustration, particularly sf illustration.

He begins by saying, "You will find that virtually every illustrative situation has to be cut down, simplified or cropped or focussed-in or just plain lied-about and ignored to make a cover. A cover (to MY thinking) is a thing which communicates in that instant during which the eye intercepts it on the newsstand. Like the old billboards wherein you had only an INSTANT in which to see and understand it. A cover that takes longer than that instant to be understood is, to the extent of the time involved to interpret it, no cover (by me). This newsstand covers, understand. Not hard cover or 'art' books. Again by my lights, and some other older lights, an ILLUSTRATION should almost step out of the frame and envelope you in the REALITY of the situation."

In one of my "Serpent's Tooth" columns for NEW VENTURE (a fanzine I co-edit) I made the statement "Science fiction illustration is art of imagination..." (not particularly original, I'll admit); Jack took semi-exception to that statement and explained it this way.



"Well, yes, it is and no, it is not. Like all illustration, to hew to the meaning of the word, it is the art of exposition of part of a greater whole. That whole being the story. The story is THE MASTER. It is if not...or you do not treat it as such you are not an illustrator. The story comes first. The rest, the illustration, is work. The illustrator must apply flesh to what may be bare bones. Imagination is required but discipline is mandatory. Do not EVER do a disservice to the story. As an illustrator you may imagine things but do not imagine them beyond the bounds of the story."

These are the types of letters I asked for in my last column and I'm glad I did so. I've been learning a great deal in the past month, a process I hope will continue for the foreseeable future. It is this type of thing, the thoughts from other minds, the views from other eyes, that are helping me see the things I want to see.

Now for a word about the reviews: difficult. It's becoming more and more difficult to find really bad examples of sf illustration to chew on in this column. I'm not yet sure whether this is a temporary phenomenon or a permanent one, but there has been a remarkable drop in the amount of lousy cover art in the past year. For instance, to find one of the two bad covers pictured in this column, I had to spend a considerable amount of time in the local bookstore looking at hundreds of sf books they had in their racks. I found many so-so covers, but only these two I thought qualified as bad...and even these two aren't Maze-and-Schell bad.

However, first things first. The lead cover this time is from the March, 1976, issue of AMAZING. It's done by an illustrator named Barber (first name unknown at this time) and is one of the most striking magazine covers to appear in years. In these days of riotous colors, the stark creams and whites are a shock to the eye, especially when they are contrasted to the dark blue-black of the sky in this superb painting. The huge ship in

the upper foreground glides serenely past the thrusting rocks in majestic silence, its deliberately asymmetrical wings covering the smaller, saucer-shaped craft like a hen over her brood. The thrust of the rocks on the right is contained by the winged craft, and its force is diverted back to the ground at the left, where it curves back in an endless, oval circuit; energy bound by design. In the background, the delicate tapestry of a nebula drifts across the dark sky, the subdued pinks, violets and blues adding a pleasing accent to the boldness of the picture and adding a light counter-balance to the diagonal created by the main ship and the rocks. Barber seems to have "let it all hang out" in this painting and the result is a brilliant piece of art. I can't recall seeing any previous covers by Barber (or, if I did, they weren't as memorable as this one) but I'll certainly be looking forward to seeing more from him.

Not quite as spectacular or innovative, but equally as good, is the cover for the June, 1976, issue of ANALOG (the only magazine, in my opinion, that really understands the power of effective illustration. It's done by Jack Gaughan, who seems determined to take my statement of a few issues ago ("...his forte' is black-and-white...") and pict's the results of "A Thrust of Greatness" by Stanley Schmidt, in this particular case the drowning of Melbourne, Australia. It is a prime example of Jack's own statement: "...an illustration should almost step out of the frame and envelope you in the REALITY of the situation." This painting does. In the first instant you see it, you are overwhelmed by the sense of immense, tragic destruction as the waves and wind whip over the frail human structures. The sullen, angry clouds seem to scream across the sky and the buildings shatter and disintegrate. The humans on the buildings are completely dwarfed by the power of the elements and are relegated to their proper place; they are completely insignificant. Angles are everywhere, diagonals rule supreme; even the scene is tilted. Disaster is always dynamic and upsetting, and Jack has captured this to perfection. Jack didn't make the final Hugo ballot this year but after this painting, his nomination for next year seems assured.

Now for a couple of bad covers. The first is a review book I received from Major Books, a new entry in the sf publishing field. The novel is called THE IMPOSSIBLE SPY and is by Kirby Carr; the cover



is painted by Wil Hulsey, Major's Art Director. It is a simple cover illo, painted competently enough (at least from a technical standpoint). It shows a man's face with a bent policeman's badge next to it and some loose, random brushwork in the background. That the man's face is obviously human and the badge is a badge begins to point out the fatal flaw in this work. It is dull, uninspired, mundane, humdrum...It is a product of the thirties or forties without the glamor that time has bestowed on those early works. It's hackwork; it's the type of thing that is done because there is no time (or desire) to get a Fabian or DiFate or Gaughan to do the cover. It is a product of a new sf publisher, one who is bound to make a few mistakes at the beginning and one who, hopefully, will learn from its mistakes and improve on them.

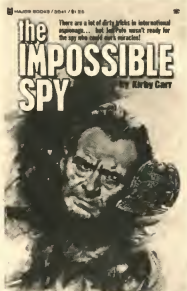
The excuse of newness, however, cannot be used to explain away this next cover. Popular Library has been printing sf for years and should know better. This cover is by Maitz (first name unknown because Popular Library seems reluctant to credit the cover artist anywhere in their books) and does the book little justice. The book is called THE VIRGIN & THE WHEELS and is two of L. Sprague de Camp's early short novels stuck together in one volume (THE VIRGIN OF ZESH and THE WHEELS OF IF) and is "typical" de Camp. If the cover is "typical" Maitz, he's in trouble. Like the previous cover, it is competently done ("competently" does not necessarily mean good, merely acceptable). He shows a familiarity with brushes and how to apply paint to a prepared surface; he also shows a fondness for Frazetta's style. Unfortunately, he doesn't have Frazetta's skill and



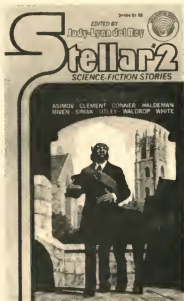
The Gimlet Eye



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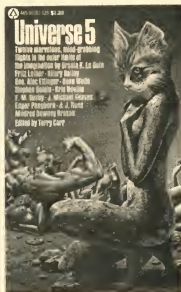
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this painting comes off as a pallid imitation, at best. The woman tied to the ship's mast is perhaps the best example of this difference; where Frazetta's woman would be sensual, lush and provocative, Maitz' woman comes off as being 30 pounds overweight, period. Another thing that shows up in the cover, but not too well in this black-and-white repro, is the W.C. Fields-type noses all the people have; the hero, the guy he is about to carve up, the woman and even the monkey climbing over the rail...all have bright red noses. This one small thing makes all the figures look silly, which does the works of de Camp a gross disservice. De Camp's work may be funny and is often hilarious, but it is never silly! This cover is silly and it makes me mad.

Back to the good stuff. Balantine Books has been among the leaders in sf for many years and, like ANALOG, seems to have a respect for the value of good art. The cover of STELLAR #2, edited by Judy-Lynn del Rey, is no exception. It's done by the Brothers Hildebrandt and is outstanding. It depicts the lead story in this collection, a delightful piece called "Custom Fitting" by James White. You can see from the cover why it would be a custom fitting; an alien ambassador might not be the easiest thing to outfit to meet the Queen of England. The Brothers Hildebrandt have managed to do in the painting what the tailor in the story did; that is, dress a centaur in contemporary clothes without making him/her/it look ridiculous (it's a him). The pose is formal in the best British tradition, done in "typical" British locale. The workmanship is excellent and the centauroid ambassador's face is made the center of attention by a clever use of shadows; they start at the right and move in a sweeping motion up, to the right, down, across his body and up to his face, which has also been subtly haloed by a cloud. All in all, a very charming (in the best sense of the word) painting.

Popular Library generally has very good illustrations on their covers (the one I raked over the coals earlier seems to be an exception). The one on UNIVERSE 5, edited by Terry Carr, is not merely good, it is great! Finding out who did it was a bit of a problem, though, as no credit is given the artist...again. An examination of the back of this wrap-around cover reveals part of a name: "...roffe". This leads me to believe that it was done by Patrick Woodroffe, a

relative newcomer whose talent for detail rivals that of James Bama. He also has an eye for the surreal, as this painting clearly shows, what with the head of a live kitten attached to the stone body of a woman. This oddity is surrounded by bits and pieces of other statues, scattered about a featureless grass-covered plain. It is this contrast between the life of the cat (and the insect which seems to have riveted its attention) and the lifelessness of the statuary that creates the unreal feeling of the picture, and it is this feeling that carries this work beyond the mundane. The attention to detail is incredible; every chip, every crack, every bit of lichen and moss, and every blade of grass is given the care of the artist. The colors blend and contrast impeccably; the blue sky and green grass contrast with the gray of the statues, yet blend as delicate tinges of the colors are reflected in the stone. This is truly a brilliant piece of work.

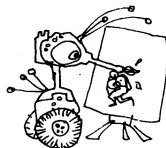
Last on the agenda is a book review, one which I put off for a long time, trying to find the right words to describe it. I wrote it four or five times, never satisfied I'm still not but this is as close as I'm going to get, I think.

I don't use the word "genius" very often. I save it for special occasions, when no other word will do. There are very few artists to whom I would apply that word, and fewer illustrators. Virgil Finlay is one of those few.

The name of the book is AN ASTROLOGICAL SKETCH BOOK, and is a glimpse into the genius of Virgil Finlay. Collected and introduced by Beverly Finlay, published by Donald M. Grant, this \$15.00 book contains 93 illustrations, 3 in full

color. These were sketches Finlay did for a magazine called ASTROLOGY: YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE. They're all of astrological signs and the finished works are incredible. Finlay was a meticulous craftsman; this is especially apparent when one realizes that he did virtually all of his work the size it was printed. What they have done for this impressive book is to collect many of his preliminary sketches for each Zodiacal sign, then show the final rough next to the final, finished pen-and-ink illustration. The difference is staggering. It's as if the final rough (a good illo in itself) was taken from a badly exposed, out-of-focus print seen through shower glass and the final pen-and-ink was taken and printed with the best equipment available. There is no sense in describing any of the individual works as words simply can't do them justice. You must see them for yourself, hold the book in your hands, turn the pages, and gaze at genius. Find it, look at it, buy it...you won't regret it.

Ate a' vista.



SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is available in microfiche from: George Hay
38B Compton Rd.,
London N.21,
UNITED KINGDOM



The July GALAXY has a striking green cover by Steve Fabian. (And he has another exceptional cover on the new August FANTASTIC; he is coming along as perhaps the best interior artist and cover artist after Kelly Freas.)

John Varley's lead novelet, "Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance" is interesting for its strange logical exploration of a beneficial merging of human and intelligent vegetable in deep space symbiosis. Add a future musicology, a lovely woman and love, and you get (I got) a story high in Wonder-interest, low in narrative tension.

There is another future music story in the issue, "Wind Music" by Diana King --- a 'woman's story' about whether its nobler to suffer as a wife and mother or be free and creative in the highlands (on an alien planet). A wise old woman and a spell of gestalt created wind music solves the problem in a rather obvious way --- compromise.

John Kennedy's prose betrays some inexperience, but he has some good story sense in "Toward the Fullness of Fate" (a pretentious title I wish Jim Baen had changed) which asks the moral question Are We Our Brothers' Keepers? Specifically, friends, if it comes about that a combination of massive crop failures and overpopulation in the non-American parts of the world dooms a couple billions of people to famine and death by starvation, what do we do about it? Kennedy's answer is admirably realistic.

Steven Utley's "Larval Stage" is an ironic short about alienation by humans and alienation by aliens. Some guys are born losers.

I begin to suspect that Jerry Pournelle writes as good a science article as Dr. Asimov, and maybe better. Asimov has clever, interesting hooks in the beginning of his pieces in F&SF, but gets dry afterward. Jerry is juicy all the way through. This one is about

some deadly applications of lasers and the possibilities inherent if Russia is making unrivaled progress in that field.

Spider Robinson began his book review column in GALAXY by slipping into Cuteness too often, but lately he is getting into Clever and Perceptive and Acute, and I'm liking his reviewing more and more.

I'm waiting for the final installment of Zelazny's serial, THE HAND OF OBERON, before commenting.

Remember way back a few issues when I liked the opening part of Joanna Russ' serial WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO---in GALAXY? I was faunching to read the last half. I was bitterly disappointed. As one reviewer said of the complete novel, "It's okay if you like 50,000 word suicide notes." (I am paraphrasing the exact wording). I agree. A downer all the way, sinking into reader-mocking insolence at the end. Joanna comes across as an extremely bitter, frustrated writer.

Speaking of downers, the entire second issue of ODDYSSEY (Summer, '76) is depressing, even though the best piece in it, Larry Niven's novella, THE MAGIC GOES AWAY, is a delight.

But even it is sad at the end as the magicians' last attempt to salvage magic for Earth fails.

Generally, the fiction is all downers, while the non-fiction is all optimistic uppers. The cover is a pink and blue disaster that is not Jack Gaughan's fault, I suspect, and as in the first issue, repeated (expanded, cut, cropped) interior illustrations betray slipshod layouts and no planning. Roger Elwood, the editor, obviously has no control over these matters.

He is charged with buying so much wordage for the magazine and after that...

I also note an extremely large proportion of pure fantasy in this issue. I have nothing against fantasy, but it do say 'Science Fiction' on the cover. Here I think Roger forgot his guidelines and put his sense of balance in the desk drawer.

In a phone conversation Roger said there would be a third issue of ODDYSSEY. I hope I happen to be in the local supermarket during the week it is on the rack. The second issue was on display locally only that long. Fifteen copies on---fourteen copies off!

The long-awaited 50th Anniversary issue of AMAZING has two exceptional items and a couple really good things, a far-above-average issue.

The exceptionals are the short novel by Jack Dann, STARHICKER, and the interview with Alfred Bester by Darrell Schweitzer.

Jack Dann is a poetic type of writer, using a lot of metaphors and similes. Thus on page 58 this paragraph is a good example of his style:

'The forest became darker and he walked under a roof of vines and branches which interlocked like awkward arms. He was passing through a natural colonade; the trees disappeared into the tangle above. But a few scattered rays of light cut into the greyness like bright swords. He was almost afraid to pass through the yellow beams. They appeared to be sharp and tangible, as if they could be shattered with a hammer.'

And on Page 60 is another prime sample:

'He had opened his hand and the fluff had blown away, a soft spiny ship seeking its own space. Perhaps, he thought as he looked at the puff-plant, a similar pressure of nature had forced him to hide in the Hraa shuttle, which was a simpler spore, one conceived by intelligent intellect. Perhaps man and all other intelligent beings were merely complex spores, driven to push outward or die. It would be a wasteful process, but nature was a cold mother.'

And again on Page 61:

'A crown of hills and rock seemed to define a giantess lying on her back. Her face was mesa. Breasts and legs were hills and hillocks. So imagined that she was staring into the lake below. Behind the green giantess was a mountain wall.'

This became a bit obtrusive, skirting close to that personally measured and defined area known to me, and to each reader, as 'affected', but it seemed to enhance his story of a rootless future hobo on an alien-dominated Earth. I hope as time goes on he is more selective and disciplined in using so many figures of speech in his narrative. There are times when he becomes too enamoured of subjective, sensitive introspection for his characters.

In the interview Alfred Bester quickly took over and ran away with the questioning and answering, and created a fascinating view of himself and his writing and his opinions of sf, writing and fellow sf writers. An extremely valuable piece.

The good things in the issue are the Ellison short story, "Strange Wine" (if that's your idea of an upbeat story, Harlan, I cringe from your downbeat work!), and editor Ted White's "Welcome to the Machine", a despairing, honest look at future male prostitution which I find worth comment, but a turn-off.

SHORT, PITHY REVIEWS

By REG

ANDROMEDA is edited by Peter Weston, a long-time British SF fan and publisher. Highly respected. This first volume in a series contains 10 new sf stories. They are:

"Appearance of Life" by Brian W. Aldiss

"Starthinker 9" by Michael G. Coney

"Waltz of the Bodysnatchers" by Bob Shaw

"Travellers" by Robert P. Holdstock

"Valley of the Bushes" by Naomi Mitchison

"An Infinite Summer" by Christopher Priest

"Doll" by Terry Greenough

"A Beast for Norn" by George R.R. Martin

"The Giant Killers" by Andrew M. Stephenson

"Seeing" by Harlan Ellison

I was agreeably surprised at the high overall quality of the stories, and the variety. This is a very good anthology. It is a futura Publications book (110 Warner Road, Camberwell, London SE5) and it is priced at 65p in the UK, and \$2.65 in Canada.

As usual Harlan's story is so gut-level heavy it sinks itself into the memory and sits there like lead, making its permanent impression.

THE LIFESHIP by Harry Harrison and Gordon R. Dickson is a taut, gripping space adventure novel. It has intrigue, danger, murder, and seems to come apart and sink into idealistic incredibility at the end. Too many sf novelists feel it necessary to solve too many human-alien problems in one swell foop. Narrow the focus, please. Good writers don't need to use the fate of all mankind to insure reader interest. (Harper Row, \$7.95)

So what is Roger Elwood into now? Comic books. Western Publishing Company is issuing a series of s-f comics this month (August) titled STARSTREAM---Adventures in Science Fiction. 79¢ price. Standard comic size and layouts.

Roger is the editor. He picks the stories from the extant body of s-f to be adapted and illustrated.

I was sent the first four issues which are scheduled for August release. I don't know if this means four issues will be released each month. God knows there are enough s-f stories to draw upon, since the 1930s.

These four are attractive packages, well-printed in color, and appear highly professional in every respect. The covers, especially, are well done: not 'comic bookish'. They're good enough to appear on any of the s-f fiction magazines...and s-f pocketbooks.

Roger has chosen stories by many of the leading s-f writers for adaptation to comic (I hate that word---comic---but there seems no alternative to describe the picture story form) format. Necessarily the stories are simplified and often exaggerated in transition,

but they do end up with a lot of impact and visual WHAM, and do present myriad alien wonders and ways of looking at man and others. The basic functions of fiction and science fiction are well served.

Add another to my list of writers I'll read eagerly in the future. She is Katherine MacLean, and she writes a rich, tough, real, depthful story.

MISSING MAN (Berkley Z3040, \$1.25) is an episodic novel about a near future young man in New York city with psi talents which allow him to tune in on others' emotions and thoughts---allowing him to trace psychopaths, psychotics, kidnap victims, those hurt or trapped... He gets a job with the Rescue Squad and manages to get into lots of dangerous situations. An engrossing reading experience.

The novel was cobbled together from novelets first published in ANALOG, but with much rewriting; the stitches hardly show.

"I'm currently doing a long thing on what I call the university novel. I've made a division between the public novel and the university novel as practiced by the university novelists---John Barth, John Hawkes, Thomas Pynchon, Grass, Barthelme. I accept them as long as they make no claims that what they are doing is literature. They exist only to be taught. They are producing Rorschach tests so that students can look for symbols. I've done them the courtesy of reading everything very carefully. Here are people with no talent for narrative or the English language.

"I mean Barth is just a heavy, joke writer of the sort that should be writing Amazing Tales or Weird Stories. He's kind of a pulp writer who has been educated beyond his capacity to absorb.

"As Saul Bellow wrote, genius is always without strain. But the university novelists don't believe that. ... We are faced with a terrible choice, either to be a public writer at a time when the public for the novel is shrinking or to be a university novelist and know you're just going to vanish inside the university, that you'll never be known outside and that you'll never attract any other novelists but teachers."

---GORE VIDAL, L.A. Times 4/18/76

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALAN BURT AKERS

CONDUCTED BY RICHARD E. GEIS

FIRST A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR:

21st March, 1976

'Dear Dick;

Thank you for your letter and the questions for Akers. Herewith duly answered and returned. If you think I've made a damn-fool reply here and there strike it out and we can have another go. As I sit here morosely looking at what I've written and thinking about what I wanted to say I realise more and more the limitations and difficulties of a writer writing about his own work. Readers will either say the man's crazed with self-love and pride, or that he is a crawling lickspittle. And I realize I've said nothing about the way Prescott is going or what I want to do with him, although that will be essentially apparent in the books themselves. I did want to stress that as far as I know there are no loose ends, that is, things that have happened had a reason for happening. And some of the results will not show up for ten or more books. I suppose this kind of book was something I wanted to do for a long time --- I had masses of stuff already in the head and researched out in papers --- and when the chance came along I just leaped on it.'

THE INTERVIEW

SFR: Alan, which volume of the Dray Prescott saga are you working on now? How many books will the series involve?

The books published to date are:

The Delian Cycle

- I. TRANSIT TO SCORPIO
- II. THE SUNS OF SCORPIO
- III. WARRIOR OF SCORPIO
- IV. SWORDSHIPS OF SCORPIO
- V. PRINCE OF SCORPIO

The Havilfar Cycle

- I. MANHOUNDS OF ANTARES
- II. ARENA OF ANTARES
- III. FLIERS OF ANTARES
- IV. BLADESMAN OF ANTARES
- V. AVENGER OF ANTARES
- VI. ARMADA OF ANTARES*

*as of April, 1976

AKERS: THE TIDES OF KREGEN, the first book of the Krozair Cycle, whole number 12. The Krozair Cycle is planned for three volume, to be followed by the fourth cycle, (link title name SCORPIO). These

books are planned in outline with some detailed development. Following the evolution of of Kregen and Prescott will take the length it needs.

24 May, 1976

'It might be appropriate to bring this up to date. The current one being done is SAVAGE SCORPIO, being the first volume in the Vallian Cycle, whole number 15. Numbers 12, 13 and 14 form the Krozair Cycle and are, respectively: TIDES OF KREGEN, RENEGADE OF KREGEN, and KROZAIR OF KREGEN.'

SFR: The Dray Prescott hero and the method of transporting him to Antares and back to Earth and then back to Antares... This suggests John Carter of Mars and a host of similarly inspired other-world adventures. Obviously you chose this device with care and forethought. What are you trying to do with the series that makes this *modus vivendi* best for you?

AKERS: The Dray Prescott stories belong generally to what has been called the Planetary Adventure aspect of Fantasy. In these stories the method of transportation is irrelevant, although many authors mistakenly spend a deal of time and effort working up mumbo-jumbo systems. In the case of Prescott, he does not know how he was transported at the beginning. In order therefore to maintain a freedom from anachronism I decided to adopt a similar system and then, at the point in the story at which Prescott discovers the means, to relate that in its order of happening. In a complex story involving human beings and extending over a considerable period the mingling of Fantasy, sf and Planetary Adventure in the structure is rewarding. It is not that the system you quote is the best; it is that it happened to fit in time and place with the opening of the story of Prescott. And I might add we will only know the answer when Prescott sends us the tapes with that information.

SFR: What procedures do you use to plot and write a segment of the Prescott saga? What is your daily schedule?

AKERS: DP is somewhat different from other stories in that the plotting is done for some long way ahead and I concentrate on highlighting those parts of most interest.

A great deal of research has to be done. I find the best procedure is to write. After that the finalising is based on a solid foundation. In the career of a writer there is no substitute for writing. If the day is not spent on research or anything else that takes me away from the desk I start soon after 9 and break for an hour or hour-and-a-half for lunch, then do on until a number of devices halt me. These may be children, an appointment, household chores, TV, or sheer exhaustion. I try to sleep and not work at night times. It is all very humdrum, really; the colour is in the words, or, at least, it ought to be.

SFR: Will Akers write another series after the Prescott saga is finished? Any solid plans?

AKERS: Nothing solid as yet. There is so much I have to do with Prescott that, assuming all goes well, the story will not end yet. It is planned out to the end of the Vallian Cycle, and the one after that is also firmed up to the point where it can be begun. By that time the various strands woven into the development will begin to intersect on an accelerating scale. For all the success of the series I own I am not satisfied with much that I have done (only an idiot believes



he has written a perfect book) and I am not foolish enough to try to put everything into the story -- but... Kregen as a place is real enough for me to want to make it come alive, and it is big enough to contain many stories, some not necessarily involving Dray Prescott, although that may be a trap, also. There is an end to the story --- or plot construction very near the end --- some of which has been hinted at already; but it is my belief that reader and writer alike will share many more adventures before we get there. After that? Yes, I would hope to create something fresh.

SFR: Do you envision (or does a publisher have plans for) the publication of the entire Prescott saga in one huge volume? Might this series run up to a million words?

AKERS: Not that I know of. It might be somewhat impractical. The Krozair Cycle finishing with KROZAIR OF KREGEN and the next two books of the Vallian Cycle --- the first of which is SAVAGE SCORPIO -- bring the total wordage over the million mark. There is also WIZARD OF SCORPIO. And the various glossaries and maps add further bulk. So I don't see that happening until they ship me out to the Ice Floes of Cicce with my own thirty-two pound roundshot for company.

SFR: It is known in certain circles that "you" are a pseudonym. If I may speak to the prime writer now: why did you opt for a pseudonym for this series?

AKERS: This is true. I had been writing sf for a number of years and was growing increasingly dissatisfied with my reception. When a novel which I considered (with all the disadvantages of a man attempting to evaluate his own work) of some merit was received quite well in the general press, drawing good reviews in the TLS (*TIMES Literary Supplement*? -REG) among others, and was ignored in the sf and fan press I decided it was time. Work in another field under a pseudonym was very well received indeed. In addition a brand new series needed a brand new name so that we could all start even. Also I was writing with Dray Prescott material bottled up and never written before, owing to a variety of reasons, and anything I'd done before had no relevance. With the exception of one foolish review in a publication the story of Dray Prescott and the name Alan Burt Akers have received proper evaluation (and I am glad to say some praise) and this heartens me that the en-

crusted cysts of 'our' literature are open to new people, with this single exception.* I instance your own very fair review in SFR as an example of an evaluation that proves me right. I may add that although Dray Prescott is a success, with the first books being re-issued in new editions, and the sales going well, I am myself too much of an encrusted cyst to be bowled over by praise, as a number of new sf writers were in the sixties to their destruction, I have proved the fallaciousness of boasting (well, there are exceptions we all not of to that one) and if it is not too pretentious to say I am humble about the success of Dray Prescott I will say it.

*As far as I am aware.

SFR: Dray Prescott is not just another pretty face and unchanging hero; he changes and matures and learns. And ages. How long can he keep up these battles and combats that depend on his lightning reflexes and great strength? How old can/will he get before he is killed or retires or solves all the problems?

AKERS: Prescott was thirty at the time he took a dip in the Pool of Baptism on the River Zelfh in far Aphrasoe. He is not immortal; he has a thousand years of life. Yes, he does change and mature on the mental and spiritual level; but his 'lightning reflexes' and strength remain as they were when he was 30... Plans exist to explore in some detail what this will mean to him later on in his life. I took the decision not to make him immortal for a number of what seemed to me very good reasons. Mortality makes him the same as us; longevity gives him greater problems. And if we are to have a whole world handled with some degree of coherence by a single man, as I desired, a single lifetime is just not enough. Had Alexander had a thousand years of life the world would be very different today.

SFR: Did you envision the entire Prescott series of novels from the beginning, or has it grown (out of control) as a result of good sales and a decision to go with a winner?

AKERS: Before a word was written a great deal of work was done in shaping up the story of Dray Prescott as a series beginning at the beginning and ending near the end. Writing convinced me that to deal faithfully with all the ideas and concepts I wanted to use would mean a very long series indeed.



Donald A. Wollheim who has throughout been extraordinarily helpful and enthusiastically suggested we break the story down into Cycles, with linking words, to keep an understandable order. Some critics have said the story moves slowly, others have said it races along too fast. This means, I suggest, that it is going at the right pace for most of us. So that the story has grown only in the sense that due weight is now being given to all components. I was concerned at the beginning to make it move along, and so handled some segments in a briefer fashion than they warranted, so that instead of the story being out of control it is truer to say that I exercised too much control. In a sense to revert to the previous question, this was a kind of commercialism; but it arose from the same reason, to make each volume an entity. Although the work is close to me and something in which I greatly delight, I try never to lose sight of the reader --- and the first reader is me --- and play fair with the reader all the time. (This observation includes comment on the scene in SWORSHIPS of the lost cassettes.)

SFR: Dray Prescott is a man who wins, who never gives up, who is out to "beat the system" (the aliens, others) and "fight City Hall". Is his character what you consider the basic character of mankind?---or is his character a necessary part of story-telling for a saga? How much is Prescott commercial, how much your gut view?

AKERS: I feel it would be presumptuous to suggest any one character is the basic one of mankind as a

whole; but in all the diversity of character it is generally agreed there are two grand divisions, the winners and the losers. If everyone was a winner the place would probably be in more of a shambles than it is now. As to a racial drive in the character of mankind as a whole, I think we have to regard that as existing because we are here. (Racial means mankind, not the modern meanings tagged on to the word). So as the mass drives relentlessly on individuals are scraped off. Society today is more concerned than ever it has been over rescuing these people. The results will show up more clearly in another fifty years or so. As to a saga, yes, whether doomed in the grand sense or successful in what he sets out to do, the hero of a saga has to be heroic. It wouldn't be a saga or a heroic fantasy if he wasn't. All that means is it would be another story, neither better or worse. Prescott as a man and as a story is probably --- apart from amateur work --- the least commercial work I have ever done, in placing a human being in situations of which we know. A great many years of storing up information have gone into providing material for the Dray Prescott series and I suppose the only commercial restraints have been that each volume of the series must approach as closely as possible an entity, whereas in fact the whole story is simply a single unit. As a person I am vastly different from Prescott and so I must assume either he is a fantasy projection of wish-fulfillment or a partially resolved statement on my part of the kind of character needed in troubled times, and therefore a direct answer to the current type of angle-character. I say answer and not challenger, for there is room for all kinds. It remains to be seen in the real world just who will have to carry on and get the world out of the mess it is in.

SFR: Would you care to predict the major socio-political-economic trends and events for the next fifty years?

AKERS: No. Anyway, sf is not on the business of prediction. Leave that to the serious folk who do attempt to tell us what will happen. Sf does attempt to prophesy, and it is in the multi-valued futures that the strength of sf lies. (That 'sf lies' is interestingly Freudian.) I suppose the simple answer is to say if we don't blow ourselves up or kill ourselves off some other way we'll all be here muddling along and lurching from disaster to disaster. There are

so many new factors in the world that if they attempt to struggle, in the case of nations, or combine, in the case of industry, the wolf will be seen in the land again. What is so infuriating about all this is that with science and technology and native ingenuity the world could be a wonderful place for just about everyone. Yet the old winners and losers syndrome crops up, Ancient Greece with high-culture and slavery casts a long shadow, and you cannot have a hundred million yachts off Monte Carlo. Once the answers to our present problems have been found perhaps the Entertainment Industry will have to shoulder the burden, Pleasure Machinery and Surrogate Experience serve the mass of humanity. And then, after that, when the whole edifice breaks down, we'll be back to the drawing board again.

SFR: Do you think mankind will reach the stars---create an interstellar civilization---or are we kidding ourselves?



AKERS: This is a question not really germane to Alan Burt Akers; but--- It doesn't really matter. What matters are the stories written about interstellar civilizations and the light they throw on us in the here and now. They can also be highly entertaining. Maybe distance will defeat us in the end, maybe we'll get around it. I rather fancy we may very well develop a hyperdrive so scorned by the high-powered academics crowding into the sf field and begin to open up the galaxy. When I say it doesn't matter, I refer, of course, to us. Once it starts, if it does, then it will matter. By that time so much will have changed, assuming the human race is still here, that what we have to say will seem to the people actually handling these problems rather like Biblical commentaries on flaming wheels, etc.

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Akers.

ANGEL, DON'T BITE THE ELECTRIC IMPERIAL

TO THE LAND OF THE ELECTRIC ANGEL
By William Rotsler (Ballantine, \$1.50)

IMPERIAL STARS

By E.E. "Doc" Smith (Pyramid, \$1.25)

DON'T BITE THE SUN

By Tanith Lee (DAW, \$1.25)

Reviewed By Paul G. McGuire

If the number of alternatives open to SF is infinite, then why do I keep reading the same ones over and over?

TO THE LAND OF THE ELECTRIC ANGEL by William Rotsler. Previously he had written "Patron of the Arts", a novella published along with its sequel as a novel under the same title.

I mention PATRON for two reasons. First, Mr. Rotsler mentions the hero of that novel several times in ANGEL. The long, long lead-in to the suspended animation time travel scene is laid in the same world as PATRON. That accounts for some surface similarity: both novels involve an artist finding true love with a fantastic, near-perfect woman who "belonged" to one of the most wealthy men in the world. This time the artist is the hero, and the rich man is the pure villain (despite a few feeble attempts by the heroine to justify (kind of) his behavior).

After mild debauchery, aches of unrequited love, and chatting about art for a third of the novel, the heroine, villain, and three others go into a cave and "sleep" for over one hundred years. They awake to a world filled with antagonistic, repressive military-religious sects. After a few captures and escapes the hero ends up being trained as a gladiator since the Roman Circus has been reinstated and is televised to appease the masses.

But there are underground movements, and....

Is this plot familiar? I cannot help but wish that writers, no matter how fine their style, when they wish to write about gladiators, would write historical---not science---fiction.

And Rotsler can write! Despite characters being introduced and detailed for no apparent reason, and a great deal of pointless discussions, Rotsler will hold nearly all who begin reading ANGEL. And when he does get started...

There is considerably more plot than I have mentioned (even King Kong), leading to one hell (and heaven) of a sixty-page battle.

TO THE LAND OF THE ELECTRIC ANGEL by William Rotsler in uneven, too familiar, but entertaining.

IMPERIAL STARS borrows standard plots from two different sub-genres (period swashbucklers and secret agent adventures) and combines them with space opera to move the story at a pace fast enough to give the reader whiplash.

E.E. Smith did create the book, but it was of necessity a "collaboration." If one looks closely at the fine print under the huge red letters E. E. 'DOC' SMITH one can read with Stephen Goldin.

Below that is a gorgeous cover painting by George Barr.

IMPERIAL STARS is the first in a series about the d'Alembert family. The d'Alemberts are a huge loyal and wealthy clan of circus performers who are really the top counter-espionage unit of the secret service of the Emoroer. The intergalactic realm is threatened from within by a conspiracy headed by an unknown but powerful illegitimate pretender to the throne--- the beastly Banion the Bastard.

Jules and Yvette d'Alembert are given the assignment to stop B the B since they are the greatest and most deadly agents in the universe, despite the fact that they are very young and totally inexperienced. You see, Jules and Yvette come from a planet with heavier gravity than Earth. Thus they are stronger than normal Earth people and possess quicker reflexes. Besides, all the non-d'Alembert agents have already died in action on the case. There's no one left. But the brother and sister act have trained all their lives for this moment when only they can save the whole universe.

Off they go, using a series of elaborate disguises, walking into one trap after another, killing, smashing in faces, questioning people with illegal and lethal drugs, and just having fun in general. Off we go, barely able to keep up, as bodies pile up from one end of the galaxy to the other.

The thing is, once again I find no startling or new concepts, and science fictional elements are more painted backdrop than real.

IMPERIAL STARS is unpretentious high adventure, a feast in the old-fashioned space-opera tradition,

although there is no real confrontation with B the B (no "walk down" finish like ANGEL provided).

Originality in treatment and style is the something extra that gives Tanith Lee's DON'T BITE THE SUN a special dazzle.

Tanith Lee is a young English-woman whom Donald A. Wollheim discovered in his slush pile. In Mr. Wollheim's own words, "It (BIRTHGRAVE) was so damn fascinating. The book ran very long... She is a tremendously talented writer. Now I'm taking a chance on her... I know I'm putting my neck out because she is a totally unknown writer, but it is one hell of a novel."

THE BIRTHGRAVE was well received and his gamble on publishing a "big" first novel paid off. Now we have DON'T BITE THE SUN which Mr. Wollheim calls "utterly different and just as delightful (and rather shorter)". And in May another large novel by her, THE STORM LORD, "as long and complex and marvel filled as her first" was published.

DON'T BITE THE SUN is written in the first person. The author displays a sparkling style as we follow the adventures of a dissatisfied, strange and darkly beautiful woman through her world. Although the age class lives (and must live) for pure pleasure, the heroine searches for some vague thing...or meaning...

The heroine is a product of her world, it reflects her, and we see it through her perceptions, with special impact. The desert blossoming scene and its aftermath culminating in a tender and bittersweet, although pathetic, attempt at affection; and her failure to grasp real love, are truly moving. The novel has deep in-

sights. A pleasure to find a real science fiction novel which succeeds in making its ideas seem fresh.

Unquestionably one of the most fascinating books I have read in years. Highly recommended.

LETTER FROM GORAN BENGTSON

April 10, 1976

'I've looked up a note I made for you about a small mystery which you should be uniquely qualified to solve.

'I know and respect the Geis. But whatever is a Geis? The word is not in any of my dictionaries, but it is in Piers Anthony's OMNIVORE p.146 of the 1969 London edition where a sentence goes like this:

He was buoyed by some nameless excitement, as though the horrible encounter had released him from a geis.

'Now, I remember reading somewhere Anthony's proud confession that he never was much of a spell-er. Could he have some kind of Geis pun on 'guise' in mind? Not likely. I have a vague memory of a Scottish word, 'geas', meaning something like bewitchment, but I haven't been able to confirm this in any dictionary.

'So the mystery remains. It isn't exactly keeping me awake nights, but I would like to know what Anthony means.'

((So would I. I suspect I've been tricked. However, the final word will have to come from the author. Piers?))



THRILLING ORBIT STORIES:

THE AVERAGE AND BELOW AVERAGE
ALL NEW SF OF THE YEAR

ORBIT 17

Edited by Damon Knight
Harper & Row, 1975, 218 pp., \$7.95

Reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer

I have a prejudice which I think can be found in most long-time science fiction readers, which makes me a little suspicious of original anthologies. It's simply this: Before the late 1960's most anthologies consisted of reprinted stories, carefully selected from the great mass of those published in the magazines. The level of quality in an anthology was usually rather high because the reader was not getting average magazine fare. The anthology editor could go through as many magazines as he needed until he found enough outstanding stories to fill his book, while a magazine editor had only his slush pile and other manuscripts received. But nowadays the anthology editor is (if making up an 'Original') in the same boat---with a slush pile; and he presents not the best of any given period, but the average, including some of the worst. The overall quality of the original anthologies has been lower than the reprint anthologies for this reason. This is where the prejudice comes in. When I read a mediocre magazine, say any issue of VERTEX, SPACEWAY, or BEYOND INFINITY (Remember BEYOND INFINITY anybody? 1967 oneshot. Came out once too often.) I am disappointed, but when I get the same below-par material in a book, especially a hardcover, I feel particularly cheated. Of course the fact that the book costs eight times as much as the magazine may have something to do with it, but since I get most books as review copies, I attribute this feeling to sheer prejudice. I have been subconsciously conditioned to expect more from anthologies than I'm getting from the all-originals. I know that one reprint book which made a strong early impression on me was A CENT-

URY OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by Damon Knight. Perhaps I expect them all to be as good as that.

ORBIT 17 is, alas, nowhere near as good as that. It starts out well enough with "The Anthropologist" by Kathleen M. Sidney, which is about an alien, raised by humans, who is sent back to his own planet as a go-between for human scientists. The idea is familiar, certainly. The writing is mostly adequate, although certain important cues are not there. I got quite a start four pages into the story discovering that somebody named Robert, who otherwise seemed a normal child, had three heads, nine legs, and three fingers on each hand/foot. The plot progresses with the usual conflict of loyalties and self-discovery, with the emotions of the alien being the same as a human would have in a similar situation. (Tarzan, anyone?) This is Sidney's first published story, and it is a pretty good debut. She may develop into a major writer later on. Right now she wouldn't be out of place in GALAXY, although I wouldn't expect her to get top billing.

Unfortunately in ORBIT 17 Kathleen Sidney stands head and shoulders above just about everybody else. "The Anthropologist" is followed by a ghastly abortion called "The Man With the Golden Reticulates" by one Felix C. Gotschalk, who has been published widely of late, and even has a novel out from Ace. The reason for this I do not know, because Gotschalk is certainly the worst stylist to enter the field since the Gernsback era. His prose can only be called leaden, verbose, clumsy, and it reads more like C-minus freshman translations from German than something a professional author would produce. Additionally he has no detectable powers of observation or invention, no ear for dialogue, no skill with situations. His characters aren't even cardboard---they're completely invisible. To be blunt, Gotschalk cannot tell a story. To be blunter, he cannot write. If he has any literary ability at all, he has yet to show it.

((REG NOTE: Darrell will probably resent this interjection, but I feel he overstates in re Felix C. Gotschalk. I read "The Man With the Golden Reticulates" (Can the man be all THAT bad? Can Damon's taste have deteriorated THAT much? I asked myself) and I sampled my way through Gotschalk's Ace novel GROWING UP IN TIER 3000 (30420, \$1.25). Felix has a strange, alien, totally objective-viewpoint

technique; he seems to view man as body-mind ruled by a combination of chemical interactions, organs, instincts, reflexes and conditioned responses. He uses an excess of technical jargon. He is a psychologist, and, man, does it show! I find this mechanistic approach more than vaguely repellent as a reader, and as a writer I assess it as interesting, but commercially suicidal: his stuff won't sell after a while due to negative reader feedback to the publishers and editors. But I suspect he could care less.))

I remember Jeff Duntemann's "The Steel Sonnets" as one of the best things from the 1973 Clarion (East) Workshop, but then, when you're reading something like 40,000 words of mostly dreck a week, anything of professional competence stands out. Rereading this story, I find it professionally competent but nothing more. It's about two sentient robots, Lounce and Speed, who are sent to explore a new world, and accidentally trigger a mass suicide reaction among the natives. The personalities of the two machines are quite cliched. Lounce is a stolid, gruff, no-nonsense type, perhaps a little dumb (his programming being less sophisticated) and he has considerable difficulty understanding the flighty Speed, who says seemingly irrelevant things all the time and spouts poetry by the hour. (Arg! Can't one of these Sensitive Souls write prose, just once?) The ending is as predictable as it is sentimental. Speed gets in trouble, and Lounce realises the value of his friend, has a change of heart, disobeys orders, and comes to the rescue. Hm... seems to me this could just as easily have been about two G.I.s in Vietnam, or the siege of Troy, for that matter.

This is Duntemann's second published story, the other one being in NOVA 4. He shows promise, and like Kathleen Sidney he could turn into a name to watch someday.

After this, a plunge into the depths. The next offering is Jeff Millar's "Toto, I Have a Feeling We're Not in Kansas Anymore" which is about a little boy who has the power to place a whole town in the plot of a grade B horror film. He will only stop if he can be visited by his favorite author, Robert Heinlein, so an impersonator is found... Millar is trying for farce and falls short. His story is only half funny, and filled with matchstick characters to whom anything can happen. And when anything can happen, who cares what



does?

"Autopsy In Transit" by Steve Chapman is a stream-of-consciousness monologue from the mind of a sentient ambulance robot which has the hots for a beautiful lady corpse. This may be the first time anyone has written of necrophilia committed by a machine, but still it's only a fragment and not a story, because nothing develops. I prefer whole stories, if you please.

"House" by John Barfoot is a little closer to a story, and a big improvement for an author whose last appearance in ORBIT was a non-functional word pattern in #11. An aging couple are so attached to their house, that when euthanasia time comes, they are made part of it. There's no snag, no conflict, no character development which would have made it more than an anecdote. The idea is interesting, but nothing is done with it.

"Fun Palace" by Raylyn Moore resembles the Millar story, only it doesn't try to become farcical until about halfway through. The result is like a steak which tries to turn into pudding halfway through---mush. Unrealistic people do unrealistic things, and nobody cares at all. This, like too many stories in this particular ORBIT seem almost completely devoid of any emotion.

Dave Skal's "When We Were Good" tries to do serious things with the trite idea of population control depriving people of children (so kids are rented out as precious commodities) and it fails, miserably, amateurishly, but still it's a lot better than Seth McEvoy's "Which In Wood Decays?", which seems to have stepped right out of PLANET STORIES during its most juvenile period, say, about 1940. The characters, a thousand-year-old lady, her robot servant, the niece who tries to bump her off for her money, the smelly green man from the swamps of Venus, and the ferocious Venusian kirk (read: bobcat) are all pulp clichés of the hoariest sort. If I hadn't seen it in ORBIT, I would never have believed such a story could be printed today, and I'm especially amazed to see Damon Knight buying it, after he so strongly criticised Robert Shekley once for "calling a rabbit a smerp" to make a story science fiction when this is exactly what McEvoy is doing. Another new writer here, but unlike Duntzman or Sidney, if he keeps this up I do not expect him to rise above the

level of Cap Kennedy or Perry Rhodent, if he even gets that far.

Now we come up briefly for a breath of fresh air. R.A. Lafferty, the only one of the old ORBIT standbys still present, gives us "Great Day in the Morning" which is one of those, er, things that he does. I'm tempted to call it indescribable. It is Lafferty. Need I say more? The Great Day is declared, possibly as a joke, and everybody except our hero, Melchisedech Duffy, is liberated from all laws of physics and reason. They walk through walls, drink coffee without cups, etc. because they have faith. Eventually they fuse together into fleshy balls. An explanation is provided, which makes an odd kind of sense in Lafferty-esque terms:

The whole thousand-times-mega cosmos began as one single-celled creature. Then he had the notion that there were two of him, and this notion was the beginning of his dreaming. He dreamed the whole multiplex thing that seemed to be the worlds. The dream grew for long eons, but now it shrinks back again to its beginning. There is still one single cell left, dreaming a diminishing dream. (p.160)

This isn't top-drawer Lafferty, but still it's Lafferty, and unlike the writers around him he is experienced; he has original ideas and the ability to control them.

For these the stories get really bad again, with Stuart Dybek's "The Maze" which almost creates drama as mutant laboratory rats threaten to take over the world (another one of those innovative ideas here) but fizzles out into a tangled mass of fuzzy descriptions and loose ends. "Quite Late One Spring Night" by John Curlovich I never managed to finish, but it seemed to be about a future Earth reduced to ruin as its colonies deserted it. Also, there's some sex, and three funny-hats types who impersonate characters. Filksinging types might like this rewrite/parody of "The Green Hills of Earth" but aside from that, forget it.

Finally, there's Tom Reamy's "Under the Hollywood Sign", which is a welcome relief and an astonishing surprise as the last story in the book. It's absolutely first-rate. Cleanly and directly written. With dialogue that sounds like people talking, characters with identifiable emotions, and everything one could demand from a good piece of



fiction. The background is a big city police department, and it's so convincing that the first half of the story reads like a good police procedural. Then the science fiction element shows up, aliens among us, disguised as men, which is not exactly a new idea, but it's handled with considerable skill so the ending doesn't seem tacked on just to make the story science fiction. There's also a lot of homosexual-bondage stuff going on, much more explicit than the meanderings in Delany's DHALGREN, and this may offend some, but it too is made real, and laced with genuine emotion. It's no surprise that Reamy won a Nebula with about his fifth published story. He'll be a superstar in a few years.

You can also wait until his story, and Lafferty's, are reprinted, as inevitably they will be. But for these two, ORBIT 17 is not worth bothering with. This volume is by far the weakest in the series so far, and it does not hold up well in comparison to an issue of even the lesser newsstand magazines. Some of the stories, such as the Gotschalk, would be below par in anything but the rankest amateur fanzine, but the others might not be out of place as filler in AMAZING, GALAXY, or VOID. Of course if they'd appeared there we could tell ourselves that the editors were working against tight deadlines; their low and slow rates of payment prevented them from getting stuff by top authors; and they just couldn't do any better.

But ORBIT pays three to five cents a word, and it only comes out twice a year, so I really doubt Damon Knight is hard up for copy. This lapse can only be one of editorial taste, and there's no excuse for it. Perhaps the series has moved beyond maturity into advanced senility. Perhaps Knight has lost all interest in polished writing, speculation, original ideas, human values, or anything but a certain quirky weirdness.

THE ALTER-EGO VIEWPOINT

BY R.E.G. & ALTER

"Alter, what is that terrible smell?"

"Smell, Geis? Probably your feet. If you'd take a bath once in a---"

"It smells like cat shit."

"I wish to hell it was cat shit. A cat would be nice to have around here...a bit of companionship..."

"But you don't have a cat, and that smell...is...I know what it is! All right, Alter, where is it?"

"What?"

"That's the smell of fermenting juice. You're making wine down here, aren't you?"

"Wine? ME? Wine? It's behind the stacks of returned VERTEXs you bought as speculation. You'll never sell those things, Geis."

"You wait, Alter. Twenty-thirty years from now..."

"We won't be alive thirty years from now---! You saving those for the benefit of the treasury of the state of Oregon?"

I'm working on a longevity formula. I'm taking 6000 units of vitamin E per day, 1,000 units of natural vitamin C, seventeen B-Complex capsules---

"No wonder our urine has been so orange lately. All those vitamins down the crapper. Geis, you have no chance in the world of living beyond---"

"I refuse to listen to your negative thinking. Positive people live longer."

Sigh "Geis, you came down here for something. What?"

"Ummm...Reviews. Yes, now I remember. That smell distracted me. It's time for you to vent that capacious spleen of yours---that icky-green-goo---all over the books we've been reading these last few weeks."

"I refuse."

"WHAT? You can't refuse. Readers by the thousands are right now hanging on your words. They'll storm the offices and perhaps do serious damage to The Body if you don't review. Worse---even worse---they might not renew their subscriptions. Review, Alter! For the love of God, review!"

"I get to keep my wine jugs working?"



"Oh...that's the game, eh? Okay, you can have your putrid home-made wine---by the way, let me have a taste when it's ready, hmm?---just get on with your cask...er...task."

"Okay. One blow struck for Alter-Ego Rights. Now...I see the book on the top of the pile is THE MULTIPLE MAN (a novel of suspense) by Ben Bova. This is near-future slick fiction about the Presidency of the good old U.S. of A., and it is the story of Meric Albano, the President's press secretary, and what happens when a couple bodies---exact duplicates of President---turn up very dead near the President during a couple speechnaking visits to big American cities."

"What, to put it mildly, is going on? What plot is afoot? Meric gets curious, does some digging and snooping, a couple more people get killed, a major secret is uncovered...and it all boils and bubbles to a hairy climax in the Capital."

"I thought it a good, gripping novel, Alter."

"I was mildly surprised Bova can write that well; characterization, good pace, good tension. Very cinematic. I wouldn't be surprised if he wrote this with one eye on the motion picture rights. It would definitely make a hell of a movie."

"You would recommend---"

"Well, at \$6.95 from Bobbs-Merrill in hardback it seems a bit overpriced unless you're a library or a hardcore collector. The paperback will be well worth the price. Good interesting, grabber of a story."

"You feel up to reviewing R.A.

Lafferty's newest from Bobbs-Merrill?"

"Why not? NOT TO MENTION CAMELS (a 'Science Fiction Fantasy' according to the hardback dust-jacket) at \$6.95 is not necessarily overpriced, since Lafferty has a Following and writes strange, almost private stories that make them suspiciously close to (if not in fact literature). So the hardcover is likely a good investment as a first edition."

"What's it about---camels?"

"Teh. No, it is about a man/personna who has many consecutive lives in alternate worlds. It is about his coterie of followers and friends and enemies who also appear in each new world. It is about Good and Evil and Charisma and... And it is written with a grace and style that make the casual, matter-of-fact killing, throat-slitting, dismembering and torture somehow acceptable and intriguing."

"R.A. Lafferty shows again that in writing it ain't so much what you say, it's how you say it. Style...STYLE...STYLE!"

"Why, Alter, I do believe you are impressed."

"Yeah, but I'd be more impressed if I could be really sure what Lafferty is really saying. I keep getting the impression he's communicating in a foreign language behind our conscious (and sub-conscious!) backs. But up front he's vastly entertaining and intriguing. Fascinating."

"Now, the next book---"

"God, Geis, don't make me review that one!"

"Why not? You hate Richard Lukoff? You think THE CRACK IN THE SKY is lousy?"

"No, no, no...As a matter of fact, I thought it was a good, realistic, well-structured, detailed Doom story. But I am getting very tired of Doom stories, where mankind (in this case) having raped and plundered and polluted the planet, retreats to a few doomed cities, lives a crowded, frustrated life with a paper-thin margin of safety, and then (in the case of Norcal dome) in an orgy of self-destruction, having learned nothing, indulges in the usual politics, scheming, power-plays, selfishness and paranoia until the dome is destroyed and the population is doomed. The good with the bad. Well-written, but a turnoff."

"The book was written several years ago, Alter, and sold to Dell

(it is Dell #5419, \$1.25 by the way) who kept on the shelf for a long time. It's a "relevant" novel whose time has passed."

"Very perceptive, Geis. Your side of the brain isn't as dumb as I thought. It occurs to me that literary trends may be influenced by economic trends. Thus as the general U.S. and world economies sink gradually into a slough of inflation and depression, the trend in fiction could be toward Optimism and Winning...as subtle, automatic compensation...as a psychological counter to the bad REAL world. And--"

"I see! Yes, Alter. And when the economy is in a long-term boom as it was in the Forties, Fifties and Sixties, the style in fiction was Losers and Doom and No-Win, because the general readers didn't feel threatened by REAL dangers. They could read and like such stuff without being disturbed deep down. It was bearable. They had inner security."

"Uh-huh. Like massmind knows deep down in its guts---senses the cycles---and reacts accordingly. Now the need is for books like R.F. Nelson's BLAKE'S PROGRESS."

"Speaking of R. Faraday Nelson, his latest Laser Book, THEN BEGGER'S COULD RIDE, (#32, 95¢), is out now. Did you think it as good as BLAKE'S PROGRESS?"

"No, but it is still a good book. He is more preachy in this one, with Solution-To-All-Man's Troubles axe grinding up front before your eyes, sparks flying, and with his eyes alight with fervor."

"Alter!"

"Don't sound shocked, Geis. I don't like to be Saved. Even so, I liked Nelson's story of the loser who became a winner. I admired his detailing of the utopian society of the not-too-near future where various localities are created in mimic of various eras of human and American history---the Roaring Twenties, the London of Sherlock Holmes, the Mormon society, the Hopi Indians...and so on. You find the era that suits you and settle down."

"But there are rulers of course."

"The Techs who make sure things run smoothly, who have the power to 'weed out' true mal-contents and Losers. They simply kill them."

"You have to admit that Nelson does a very good job of showing how a low-energy technology works."

"Yeah,...He shows in dozens of

ways how waste is recycled, how wind and sea and sun are used to provide the lower-level of energy this multi-faceted society needs. The mimic towns are all linked by this underlying ecology-structured economic system. The Techs are the behind-the-scenes masters who make it all go and make damn sure nothing and nobody screws up the works."

"In books like this, Geis, the establishment wins. The rebel loses. And the hero is part of the establishment or joins it and is happy in it. That's what is really so revolutionary about Ray Nelson's novels. His heroes don't overthrow society, they work for it, support it, fix it if it needs fixing. And help those people in it who need adjusting to society. In his view society need not adjust to the individual."

"You think this theme is the coming trend, Alter?"

"Yup. It'll get lotsa attention from trendy writers who want to be on the winning side---and sell more books."

"Speaking of trendy writing, what do you think of JAPAN SINKS by Sakyo Komatsu (Harper & Row, \$7.95)?"

"The title says it all. The latest, perhaps the ultimate disaster novel. It builds and engrosses and seems to be technically accurate as to geology and faults and the Japan Trench and seismology and tectonic plates and all that jazz. Good science fiction strives to credibility to buttress the seven impossible things the reader is required to believe before breakfast."

"I thought the reactions of the other nations to the disaster, and the reactions of the Japanese were of special interest."

"Right: the selfishness, the heroism, the fatalism, the prejudice...all there. And, by the way, from the quality of the prose it is apparent that the translator, Michael Gallagher, did a fine job."

"Now, Alter, the last book we've read so far is--"

"Geis, please do me a favor and pick a book to read which you know will be lousy. I'm supposed to be chewing up books and spitting out authors' bones in this column, and all I find myself doing is praising books, making nice complimentary remarks...And look at that book you've got your hand on, THE FOREVER WAR by Joe Haldeman. Another good one. In fact *grumble* it's very good, worthy of the Nebula Award and the upcoming Hugo

Award if it should win."

"The tendency, Alter, is to choose books I'll enjoy, since bad writing causes us so much pain..."

"We have our duty to cut a swath through the drek, Geis. We must suffer so that the readers can read without the agony we have endured. After all, he who puts up signs saying Here There Be Crap is of equal value to society as he who bounces around shouting of the goodies he's found."

"All right, after this I'll pick a certain amount of yecch writing for you to demolish. Will that make you happy?"

"I'm only asking for three or four bad books an issue, Geis."

"Okay, okay. Now say something nice about THE FOREVER WAR, even if it sticks in your craw."

"Well, it's got that combination of detailed future technology and real people in real situations with real emotions and real pain and death that is always a sure-fire reader-grabber. Man-kind's eon-long war among the stars against an alien enemy. But with irony and understated bitterness. It is also the story of a soldier who survives, who manages to find love and to live to enjoy it. It is a logical, believable series of extrapolations into the future of man. I particularly like Haldeman's ability to show how out-of-place the veterans have become in the changed civilizations of Earth when they return from various engagements with the enemy (which, due to faster-than-light speeds, have caused ever-greater time differentials between their subjective time/age and the "real" time passed on Earth.) The novel is a Winner, a hell of a good reading experience, and I imagine Joe will make a small bundle from it, as he deserves."

"At this time, Alter--"

"Go away, Geis! Let me rest! My tendrils are dry. I need a soothing drink of my wine."

"All right. I declare a short break. Hey, pour me a snifter of that purple stuff..."

Geis here. Alter is still zonked out on that awful home brew wine of his. It's disgusting the way he staggers and lolls and grins and mouths obscenities and bemoans his limp tendrils.

That's all for this issue, I'm afraid. I'll keep him sober next time.

A BIT MORE PEPPER MIGHT....

TO SERVE MAN--A Cookbook for People
by Karl Wurf
Owlswick Press, 1976, 94 pp., \$.65

Reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer

Some years ago Damon Knight wrote a short story called "To Serve Man" in which the ultimate shocking revelation was that the seemingly benevolent aliens, who had given the world all sorts of technological marvels, ate people, and a book of theirs, the title of which translated approximately as HOW TO SERVE MAN, was a cookbook.

I doubt very many readers seriously expected to ever see a copy of the book, but, well, life is full of surprises, folks, and here it is. Or something which purports to be it. My first impression of TO SERVE MAN is that it is a fake, because it shows no signs of extra-terrestrial origins. It seems to be written by a very Earthly gourmet cannibal for others of similar persuasion.

Yes, it's a "cookbook for people" just like the subtitle says. For cooking people. It begins with general advice to the anthropophage, such as:

Contrary to folklore on the subject, children should be strictly avoided. They are small. Their disappearance sets off persistent, nosy search parties. They don't even taste good. There are drawbacks with women as well: they weigh less than men, on the average; and a lower percentage of that weight is muscle...

Therefore, except for a few stray lady wrestlers, the preferred donor for the cannibal table is a man who has reached his full growth but has not yet gone too far or dried up with old age. Since even a moderate spare tire represents a ridiculous quantity of lard, a lean, hard-muscled build is preferable to mere bulk. (P. 13)

Then come the recipes, which aside from a few jokes, are reasonably straight:

BRAINS WITH MUSHROOM SAUCE

Exercise toughens or enlarges almost every part of Man except the brains, so that those of a thinker are quite as tender as those of -- well -- whatever ethnic or occupational group one cares to insult. They are so tender -- the brains, not the ethnic/occupa-



tional group -- that they should be pre-cooked immediately as they come available, as follows:

- 1 set brains (about 2 1/2 pounds)
- 2 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. vinegar

Rinse gently in cold water, place in saucepan, cover with gently boiling water, add salt and vinegar, and simmer covered for 35 minutes. (pp. 66-67)

And so on.

What is the use of this book?

Well, I suppose you could cook from it, if you are willing to take the risks outlined in the introduction, or if you use a different kind of meat, but TO SERVE MAN seems intended as a conversation piece, an oddity, like the Owlswick edition of the NECRONOMICON (the first in modern times, and the first ever in North America. In the original tongue, alas, out of print). It is good for taking down from the shelf and appalling your mundane friends, who aren't in on the joke, if you enjoy doing that. But be careful. Don't do it to people you don't trust, or who are bigger, stronger, and more numerous than you, and who haven't been fed recently.

You wouldn't want to give them any ideas.

LETTER FROM CHARLES PLATT

May 23, 1976

'Science fiction fans often complain that a review of a science fiction book "misses the point" when it is written by a non-science fiction reader. "Outsiders" who know nothing about science fiction

are supposedly unable to review it competently.

'If this is true, it must work the other way around, and Darrell Schweitzer proves the point. As a science fiction fan, he is incompetent to review non-science fiction competently. He seems to think in logical and literal-minded mechanistic terms (his phrase "non-functional word patterns" sounds more like part of a computer program than a piece of literary criticism). This approach may make sense applied to a science fiction book, but most of NEW WORLDS #6 is not science fiction. Consequently, unfamiliar with stories that are humanistic rather than mechanistic, and indirect rather than direct (for the good reason that it is not always possible to make a subtle point in direct terms), Schweitzer misses messages and intentions that I would have thought were so obvious that they barely needed mentioning. His summaries of some of the stories are a joke, bearing almost no resemblance to what the stories are really about. Truly, he "misses the point" --- and gets angry as a result.

'It is quite possible for me to take every story in the book and explain to him its value and its "meaning". But why should I bother? NEW WORLDS has been receiving reviews like Schweitzer's in fanzines for the last ten years, proving again and again that the concept oriented, pedantic, literal-minded approach of science fiction fans works as a barrier to their appreciating what we are trying to put across. I deliberately saw that the U.S. edition of NEW WORLDS #6 was packaged unlike science fiction, to reach readers more familiar with modern literature. People like Schweitzer are beyond hope or help, and it's a waste of time trying to communicate with them. Let them stick to science fiction and forget about NEW WORLDS; and then, perhaps, we can thankfully forget about them and their dumb opinions.'

((I seem to recall Darrell mentioning in a recent letter that he has graduated with a degree in English Literature... He is not "just" a sf fan.

((But---if Darrell does reflect the biases and reading prejudices of most hardcore sf readers, then his regressive reaction to NEW WORLDS #6 is of value to the thousands of hardcore sf readers who read SFR. Those few who wish to sample experimental, "modern" sf with its ambiguities and non-plots, metaphors and indirect meanings need only rush down to their nearest large

bookstore and buy a copy. Fair enough?))

WHAT'S A NICE KNIGHT LIKE YOU DOING ON A PLANET LIKE THIS?

Reviewed By REG

TOMORROW KNIGHT by Michael Kurland (DAW UY1220, \$1.25) isn't just a run of the mill potboiler that happens to be well done and engrossing. Kurland has the talent to create and sustain interesting characters and he paces his fiction so well it sails along with the reader in tow -- happily in tow.

A good read. With the bonus of more to come as at least one sequel is called for.

There is one line I love at the end of chapter 13: "It's what a man thinks is true which controls his actions, not what is really true."

Kurland is dealing with unfolding truths and the withering of illusions as Lance Corporal Carl Frederic Allan of THE HOLY CRUSADE OF HIRAM THE SIXTH, learns that the Quests (aliens and others) who observe the fighting also observe other time-period Earth wars in other zones (beyond the Barriers) from hovering flitter-boats.

Earth has become a side-show planet for extra-terrestrials? No. Because this planet really isn't Earth, see, and...

There is a pretty girl -- daughter of a ruler of the governing class -- there are two knowledgeable escapees from other zones running from Inspectors -- there is the slave rebellion in the side-show Confederacy, the Devil's Island escape, the modern city of Sabloo with its spaceport...

WHEN THE LITTLE HANDS MEETS THE BIG HAND...

Reviewed By REG

Donald Hutter, the executive editor of Holt, Rinehart and Winston, was kind enough (at the suggestion of Larry Niven) to send along a bound, uncorrected proof of Larry's new (early September publication) sf novel, A WORLD OUT OF TIME.

Mr. Hutter said in the covering letter that H,R and W 'hope to be taking on other authors in this field.'

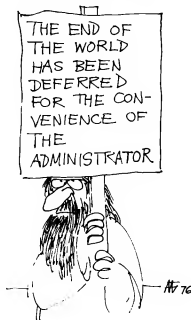
Well...on to the novel. It's

good, of course. Larry has reached, long since, the point in skill (he already had the talent) where almost anything he writes is first class.

In WORLD, he has used the resurrection theme -- with twists -- as a cryonic cancer man's mind is inserted (hundreds of years after becoming a popsicle) into the "wiped" brain of a criminal. Jaybee Corbell as been brought to consciousness to serve the state, and there begins Corbell's clever, bold and ultimately successful rebellion against the State.

And -- his grand quest, over millions of years -- for immortality.

Don't ask me to explain.



This is a gripping, far-future adventure, full of wonder, full of realistic, believable action and suspense...but it also verges, after a while, on the incredible. Diving into the heart of a giant black hole at the center of the galaxy, being time-warped empty-ump years into Earth's future, fighting a running battle with a loyal State computer in his spaceship...I tell you, it gets complicated.

Then there are the far-future adventures of Corbell on an Earth strange and warped by a past war between Boys and Girls. Pure marvelous.

Which is why this novel is best suited for the hardcore sf reader, or one who has a mind highly stretchable. The casual sf reader might end up with a headache and his mind blown out of shape.

Larry Niven has a fertile highly inventive imagination and he uses it all in A WORLD OUT OF TIME.

MORE SEDUCTION OF THE EAGER

4-20-76

Dr. Roger C. Schlobin
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'Please excuse me if I'm a bit incoherent. I just finished teaching my Chaucer class, which is always a high, went out boozing with my students, which is even better, and received the sample copy of SFR #16 that you sent. One of these alone would be enough for one night, and now I have to write you a letter.

'I hope you can announce THE YEAR'S SCHOLARSHIP IN SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY to your readers. I'm trying very hard to bridge the "supposed" gap between academe & fandom (a gap I don't see or feel), and I want very much to include the valuable material in fanzines in YSSFF. So far, I'm planning to at least include CTHULHU CALLS, SFR, ALGOL, and LUNA Monthly. I'm open to any other suggestions of WELL ESTABLISHED fanzines who publish criticism and Scholarship. Anything, zines & offprints, that anyone could send me would be great.

'YSSFF will begin with the 1974 compilation.

'I'm also hard at work on an annotated fantasy bibliography for THE SCIENCE FICTION REFERENCE BOOK (Fax, 1977). Any help anyone might suggest for this would be appreciated, too.'

TO ALL PRESENT & FUTURE SUBSCRIBERS

IF YOU MOVE I NEED YOUR FORMER ZIP-CODE AS WELL AS YOUR NEW COMPLETE ADDRESS. FAILURE TO COMPLY BRINGS AN INSTANT CASE OF THE DREADED VENUSIAN GLOMLIPH DISEASE WHICH CAUSES ...

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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW
P. O. Box 11408
PORTLAND, OR 97211

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SMALL PRESS NOTES

By REG



Before I get to reviewing and screwing the small press publications on the desk, I am reminded of a weird friend of mine who had a small press.

How small was it?

Thought you'd never ask. It was so small he had to bleach postage stamps to get paper to feed through it. It was so small he had to train six cockroaches a day to run it.

Why six?

Well, you know how dumb cockroaches are; they kept getting their feelers caught in the rollers.

Groan

Why that press was so small agate type was a headline. It was so small you had to use an electron microscope to read the classified ads.

Poor guy went broke and left the country, of course. No call for a press that small. He did get one big order, though. Fellow came in and ordered a five hundred copy printing of his 200,000 word self-published novel. My friend tried to handle the order, but the customer cancelled out after waiting six months and finding only eight paragraphs of the first chapter had been printed--one word per printed page using 10 point type...and even then the margins were too narrow. Never did find a box the right size.

Worse, my friend sneezed one time while collating the first sentence and it took him a week to find all the pages.

Why that press was so small---but enough. Let me get into the meat of this column.

I have in hand two chapbooks issued in individually numbered limited editions by Apocalypse Press (POB 1821, Topeka, KS 66601).

They are in the 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 format, offset, on good paper and heavy covers. They run 38 to 40 pages.

Offered as collectors items. Priced according to autographed copies status. Thus, a printed signature copy costs \$2.00; a personal signature copy costs \$5.00; a plate signed and a personally signed set costs \$6.00. Add 50¢ extra to cover postage and handling for each book.

You are asking who the hell wrote those chapbooks that makes stories and signatures worth these prices?

Would you believe Isaac Asimov? Yes, and his chapbook, "Good Taste", is a delicious comment on cultural relativity and what makes good food good. I liked the story very much. Clever cover showing some rather ribald, naked tongues.

The other chapbook is "The Apocalypse Papers" and is sub-titled 'A Fiction By the Firesign Theatre'. The members of that group have written segments of a loose, episodic, undistinguished s-f story. The Firesign Theatre are David Osman, Phillip Austin, Phillip Proctor and Peter Bergman.

Volume three in this series will be "Down Deep" by Harlan Ellison and Ron Cobb. Now THAT would be worth having.

Loomponics Unlimited, "Sellers of Unusual Books", (Box 264, Mason, MI 48854) has a catalogue some may find fascinating, others may find frightening. For instance, their all-time best seller is THE POOR MAN'S JAMES BOND. It is a collection of how-to formulas and instructions on making mace, tear gas, explosives, time bombs, bombs in general, altering shotguns and handguns for more firepower, evading

pursuit, silencers, poisons...The revolutionary's handbook. You may one day have to have a copy as self-defense.

The catalogue also lists many gun books, how-to-kill books, lock books and booklets, "personal and family survival" books, old-time formula books (for common household products), medicine formula books, THE MOONSHINERS MANUAL, HOW TO HIDE ALMOST ANYTHING, HOW TO CUT YOUR FOOD BILL IN HALF OR MORE. And so on. The catalogue itself is an education. Disturbing.

George H. Beahn, the editor of the new and complete VAUGHN BODE INDEX, sent along a copy for review, and I suppose partly because the earlier PSYCHOTICS and SFRs (1969, 1970, 1971) printed a number of Vaughn's drawings.

The major interest for me in the INDEX is Vaughn's comments on much of his individual works (THE MASKED LIZARD, Cobalt-60, Cheech Wizard, "Getting Shafted") and other key items and his article "Bode Consciousness" concerning himself and his art in general.

Throughout the INDEX (which is 8 1/2 x 11, offset, full-color covers, on heavy stock) are photos of Vaughn from childhood on through the various Changes he went through ---from square, straight boy and early youth to the underground free soul experimenter in life-styles and exotic experience.

He died age 33, on July 18, 1975, a few days before his 34th birthday (July 22). He died of a bizarre mishap: a "bondage device" which was supposed to automatically release from his neck, didn't. He was alone. That's a dangerous game and a stupid death. But, then, his emotional needs almost always overrule reason and intelligence in man.

THE VAUGHN BODE INDEX is full of reproductions of his work and is so far as I can tell a virtually complete compilation of his published work.

It costs \$5.00 and is available from: C.W. Brooks, Jr., 713 Paul Street, Newport News, VA 23605.

I cannot let pass the three excellently printed hardcover books by Donald M. Grant, Publisher, sent me: three Conan adventures by Robert E. Howard.

A WITCH SHALL BE BORN is illustrated beautifully by Alicia Austin with four full page-color plates

and six full-page line drawings.

You should all know Howard's style by now: great vividness, unashamed melodrama. As for instance this from A WITCH SHALL BE BORN:

"Then the masses of their horde opened to right and left, and through the cleft rushed three thousand Hyborian horsemen whose presence we had not even suspected. Men of Khaurn, mad with hate! Big men in full armor on massive horses! In a solid wedge of steel they smote us like a thunderbolt. They split our ranks asunder before we knew what was upon us, and then the desert men swarmed on us from either flank."

'Valerious, berserk, slashed again and yet again before the crumpling figure could fall. The blade licked through flesh and bone. The skull-like head fell one way, the half-sundered torso the other.

"Valerious whirled on his toes, quick and fierce as a jungle cat, glancing about for Salome. She must have exhausted her fire-dust in the prison. She was bending over Taramis, grasping her sister's black locks in one hand, in the other lifting a dagger. Then with a fierce cry Valerius' sword was sheathed in her breast with such fury that the point sprang out between her shoulders. With an awful shriek the witch sank down, writhing with convulsions, grasping at the naked blade as it was withdrawn, smoking and dripping. Her eyes were unhuman; with a more than human vitality she clung to the life that ebbed through the wound that split the crimson crescent on her ivory bosom. She groveled on the floor, clawing and biting at the naked stones in her agony.'

Man, nobody writes with that verve and panache anymore. Who would dare be that colorful and dynamic? There was incredible enthusiasm and delight-in-his-style and story in Howard. He wrote for the reader's naked id.

We're too inhibited and cowed by good taste and too afraid of being "hack" to write that way nowadays. A pity.

The other two Conan adventures from Grant are RED NAILS and THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT. All three in the same superb hardcover format, with RED NAILS illustrated in color and line drawings by George Barr (lovely work!), and THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT illustrated magnificently by Richard Robertson. These books are expensive, but worth the price for the Howard collector and the fan of means who loves fine books (and dynamic, exciting reading). TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT costs \$15.00; RED NAILS costs \$15.00; and A WITCH SHALL BE BORN IS \$12.00.

I want to "review" a magazine here without having but looked through it.

It is STARWIND--Science Fiction and Fantasy. A handsome 8 1/2 x 11 offset, 84 page typeset magazine of fiction, articles, poetry, art, letters, and an interview (with Jack Williamson by Darrell Schweitzer). It is a group-published fanzine, edited by Warren Dileo, address: 318 Ohio Union, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210.

The price is in the USA, \$6.00 for four issues, \$1.50 single copy. Published (the masthead says) twice a year. It has to be subsidized by somebody or some group or agency. It must cost a buck and a half per copy to print.

It has neat, clean layouts---and mostly amateur (in the bad drawing sense) artwork which gives the magazine an overall impression of editorial bad judgement, which leads the browser to the subtle conclusion (perhaps the unconscious conclusion) that the fiction and articles are of the same level---bad amateur---and not worth reading.

It is sad but true that we judge a product by its image, in the beginning! Nothing sinks a magazine quicker than bad art/or sloppy headings and layout.

For all the work and dedication and enthusiasm that goes into STARWIND, it is betrayed by inexperience or perhaps lack of editorial courage or authority.

Just had a call from Jim Baen, editor of GALAXY, and we agreed that having Alter review some small press publications would be interesting. So the rest of this section will be in...did you say the December issue, Jim?

A NEW, NEW LOW IN SF?

THE EXPENDABLES:

- #1 THE DEATHWORMS OF KRATOS
- #2 THE RINGS OF TANTALUS
- #3 THE WAR GAMES OF ZELOS

By Richard Avery
Fawcett Gold Medal P3306, P3307, P3430. All \$1.25

Reviewed By Buzz Dixon

These are turkey-books. They take Captain Future and THE DIRTY DOZEN and Allistair MacLean and chew them up and spit them out while going "Gobble-gobble!"

Avery has dragged space opera to a new low. An imbecile's Sam Peckinpah, Avery relishes violence, gore, puke, splintered bones, big tits, artificial limbs, amputations, and gang rape. His only detailed sex scenes are various gang rapes. One-to-one sex is bypassed.

These books are silly, childish, and stupid. Avery skips about merrily like a drunken elephant, dropping non-sequiturs and plot twists with gay abandon.

His three main characters are James Conrad, your typical bionic, disgraced paranoid space captain; Indira Smith, your typical gang-raped and artificial-limbed woman; and Kurt Kwango, your typical nigger.

Kwango is so embarrassing as to entirely remove what little entertainment values the books have. Avery tries to pass this off by saying Kwango's Uncle Tom routine is a jive he plays on Conrad. Actually, like Robert Crumb, Avery is unable to develop a realistic black character so he falls back on stereotypes.

Evidently Avery is a man of limited imagination. His minor characters' names (John Doe, Hal Mencken, Jane Ustinov, Fidel Batista) bear this out.

For \$2.50 you can buy the next ten issues of HOWARD THE DUCK comic, a much better buy.

REG NOTE: What Buzz perhaps forgets is that this series is the creature of the publisher, more so than of the author. It is a series designed and aimed for a specific type of reader. If Richard Avery is a lousy writer and if these books are very badly written, it is with the publisher's full knowledge and consent.



LETTER FROM PETER MANDLER

June 28, 1976

I no longer have the time to write reviews for Barry Malzberg to get upset over; I think that's one matter best left closed. On the other hand...well, when it comes to this business of Michael Coney and self-censorship, I feel that you've done a good job of distorting my words and that they deserve some self-defense.

I did not call upon Mr. Coney "to inhibit himself...in the name of the public interest." I called upon him to be consistent. If he were truly dedicated to liberation, I suggested, he should "cease from discouraging it"---in the interest of his own principles. I would advocate self-censorship in the public interest only if the author sees that abstract as a desirable (though this is incidental to what I actually said). The ideal of art-inviolability is all very nice and...and idealistic, but it is hardly compatible with even the most simplistic Libertarian fist-swinging credo (i.e. "as long as it doesn't hit anybody.") A mental, or creative, fist is as potentially harmful as a material one, and fiction has always been an effective form of propaganda---the Nazis were masters of the genre. I would not support the publication of such propaganda, especially if I was, as Coney claims to be, in disagreement with its substance---much less write it myself.

Yes, "fiction has a strange effect on those of wavering conviction" and---here's your second distortion---I do not consider myself immune to that effect. Where exactly did I make that claim? And how would it be relevant, except to confirm this elitist image you have of me, out-of-touch in ivory tower Oxford? (only you could sweepingly generalize on the basis of a postmark). You may be the elitist. You lie tucked securely in the resources a middle-class upbringing and education have provided, backed by an intelligence which, fortunately, allows you to pull on a source of (writing) income to buy your Selectrics and dental work---while others ("a few black/poor groups" you call them) are still dying young of malnutrition and untreated illness, trapped in a ghetto by their upbringing and education. Before you continue to make snide and ill-informed comments about British unions, consider, please, the housing, health and educational concessions they have won since the war; despite the lower standard of

living (caused, perhaps, by lack of resources, the loss of empire and trade advantages), anyone in Britain can climb from a "disadvantaged" state into the educated ranks with a free university education, not to mention remain healthy under the National Health Service and housed under local council programs. I don't hear anyone complaining when they receive their grant checks, and even few staunch Conservatives seem to feel that their essential liberties are being eroded. On the contrary---with the increase in "public-sector" participation, more people involve themselves in the affairs of society, either by voting at the least (70% of the eligibles), of discussing, demonstrating or speaking up in any way possible. "Politicians," consequently, both can get away with and want to get away with less. There is less of an atmosphere of power-grabbing and subverting perfectly innocent institutions, and more of one in which a government is open to inspection and subject to controlled growth.

"Freedom is useless to "the poor/black groups" unless they are alive and healthy enough to enjoy it---the government exists to ensure the supply of life and health to those who might otherwise be denied them. (I would widen the scope, but it would take more time than I have to adequately justify myself). Give them that much and then let freedom follow---yours as well as theirs.

(If that's what you call rhetoric... it states my case as well as your rhetoric states yours).

'On the other hand, as Jerry Ruemelle put it elsewhere in your pages, if you do not see that there is something fundamentally wrong with pure freedom if it includes freedom to starve, then maybe there is no way we can communicate.'

((You make England sound like an island of utopia---with 25% per year inflation, with doctors fleeing the virtual slavery of the wonderful national health service, with its unions ripping off the rest of the people, and with a government unable to live within its income and forced to borrow vast sums from its friends to keep going.

((I'm admiring of your admission that you are of wavering conviction, though your letter seems to show very strong convictions. In which areas are you vulnerable to the siren-call lies of fiction?

((I still reject the argument that fiction and writers "should" be censored "in the public interest" because of fiction's possible effect on some people of 'wavering conviction'. That obviously leads to total state control of all media, all communication---even one-on-one conversations. Heaven forbid that one mind should be changed in any way in any area by anyone on any subject. Except by those who are in position and authority to decide what is best for everyone to think, of course.

((My upbringing was in an upper lower-class household, by the way. Dad was a truck driver. I had two years of college. I refuse to feel guilty for having and using a bit of intelligence and talent. I am largely self-educated and self-made, I think.

((By all means let us have equal opportunity and equal education. But let us not blink the fact that there are stupid people who inevitably have mostly stupid children. Feed them, yes, and house them for free if necessary, but let us not pretend they are the equal in potential or performance of the more intelligent, and let us not put them into positions where they will make stupid mistakes which will do harm to others, because of government enforced "quota" systems that force the hiring of people regardless of qualifications. In this country if kids are dying of malnutrition it is because they are fed cokes and Twinkies and candy instead of good food. Must we put a social worker in every "disadvantaged" home to insure proper food intake? To make sure they buy a quart of paint to fix up a room? To dig and plant a garden for them to make their food stamps go farther?

((The minimum wage laws have structured a class of unemployed into our society; those laws have "helped" the poor into a state of welfareism, because most of the poor are simply morons and the work they can do isn't worth the minimum wage the law demands they be paid.

((Our liberal "bleeding heart" "do-goodism" welfare and employment and housing programs are a selfish con game perpetuated in the name of helping the poor but for the actual benefit of the lower-middle-class mass of college grads who need jobs and who administer and staff all those government programs.

Our inevitable moron 10% of the population will always be with us. No amount of Liberal hand-wringing and weeping and government "boot-strap" programs will change that.))

ALIEN CONCLUSIONS

BY THE EDITOR



"Alien Thoughts" Continued

As to politics: all Jimmy Carter has to do is stay alive and keep from having an affair with one of his secretaries, and he'll be our next president.

The Republicans have a sour choice. Keep Gerald Ford and lose, or turn to Ronald Reagan and lose. Ronnie is at least more attractive, and shares with Carter an anti-Washington appeal, although he only promises to take away the "free" goodies while Carter promises more free goodies given more efficiently and honestly. Heh-heh.

On the economic front the experts are puzzled at the slow decline in loan volume at banks, and at the steadiness of interest rates. Government borrowing to finance the 68 billion dollar deficit (and the 30 billion dollar per year interest payments on the total debt) is what sustains the current interest rates, plus the not-so-odd fact that basic interest rates always are roughly equal to the inflation rate.

The recovery from the recession is now 14 months old. Most recoveries don't last more than about 24 months.

The droughts in Europe and other places will cost those nations more money for food. That is, more income will go to basic necessities, less to optional items, which means business will begin to feel a pinch soon. The OPEC nations will increase oil prices this winter to keep even with our inflation. They won't allow us any longer to inflate our way to cheap energy.

The low-point in unemployment has, in the last few recoveries from recessions, been roughly 4%, 5%, 6%, and is now 7%. This suggests a trend which will see a base rate of unemployment about 8-10% in a few years, with peak unemployment in the 15% area.

The stock market, in constant dollar terms, has been in a jagged decline since the mid-sixties.

England, which was given a 5.5 billion dollar line of credit by the largest industrial nations a few weeks ago, has already drawn down 1.5 billion of that to keep the pound steady...yet now, 7-9-76, the pound is beginning to sink again.

Want more bad news? It is speculated that the only thing keeping the economy on a slow advance is the "catch-up" buying of new cars by those who put off buying in 1975. All the car companies will be raising their prices 3 to 4 hundred dollars per car in the Fall. Could the current high sales rate be due to "catch-ups" and those who are buying now to avoid price increases later? Will car sales turn sour this Fall and send the economy into a swan dive?

Enough of this Cassandra bit; I love it, but there are more important matters pressing on this space, namely short quotes, outrageous summations of letters-of-comment, a discussion of next issue, and notes and comment on a lot of items on the desk--in that pile there...no, in that one...no....

Lynne Holdom writes to warn: 'You might mention somewhere that THE STARMEN OF LLYRDIS by Brackett is a reprint of THE GALACTIC BREED, an old Ace double. If people order by mail they often get trapped that way.'

Gerry de la Ree sent word that Stephen Fabian is at work on a second series of NUDES, to be published later this year. (See Alter's review of the first series in SFR 17.)

Lorna Toolis says: 'I was in one of the local (Manitoba) bookstores (Paperback Galaxy) talking to one of the owners, who said that they had sold several copies of BLAKE'S PROGRESS and that some of the customers had mentioned buying it as a result of the review you gave it (as I did myself).'

Also from Canada is a letter from David Vereschagin with a clip from a Canadian news magazine that lists the top 22 authors circulated in 1975, in the Edmonton library.

Agatha Christie is first, John Creasy second, George Simenon third, Anthony Trollope fourth, Elery Queen fifth, Conan Doyle sixth ... (mystery-suspense writers, mostly, please note) ...and guess who came in 15th? Robert Silverberg.

Vic Kostrikin foams: 'Dammit, Dick, I'm the one who sent ya that illo that went uncredited on page 12 (of SFR 17). I didn't draw it of course, but Washington U's computer did from a graphing program it ran, so I guess you could credit it to the IBM 360 in Sever Hall.'

A.B. Clingan, writer and publisher of THE DIVERSIFIER (semipro sf fictionzine) writes that in 1972 he wrote a short story titled "High Bank" which was subsequently sold to Scott Edelstein's anthology, FUTURE PASSTIMES. The anthology was delayed and should be issued about now. Clingan's worry is that his story will be thought derivative of ROLLERBALL, and he wants it clear that his story predates the original ESQUIRE story and the movie.

David Taggart maliciously wrote: 'I was browsing through...the March 1954 issue of IMAGINATION...in which PSYCHOTIC (my first fanzine) is reviewed ("Are you feeling dull and normal lately? Try PSYCHOTIC...") On the next page, a fanzine with an article by Harlan Ellison is reviewed. Hope I haven't made you feel old...'

Like hell you don't. Kill him, Harlan.

Mike Gilbert's letters are always interesting, but hard to read. My interpreting of his pen-scratchings is:

'Freff: re: the biggest things in pb's now are cut-outs and metallic lettering, etc. on the covers. Bantam, under L. Lenoe (spelling?)

has always been the innovator of graphics which all other companies try to follow --- Bantam graphics are always the best.

'Freff--where are your photo files? TRITON's Neptune was merely a blue MARINER photo of Mars. ((See Freff's column in SFR 17)) As for the rest---a mainstream illustrator thinks in cliches, he has to---because that's what most pb work consists of---he has to please the art director, not the reader or reviewer whom he rarely hears from. Western, comix, and SF cover people are the only ones who ever hear from the audience, generally. Mr. Hooks would be a fool to go into SF considering all his other work which you stated pays 3 to 4 times as much as SF illustration. By the way, the NOVA cover is an Eddie Jones, bought from his German agent in slide form and was not done to illustrate NOVA.

'I have had quibbles with Ron Miller, basically on matters of commercial art which he wasn't aware of, but he is one of the most under-rated astronomical artists in the business. In my opinion he is the best and the reason he is neglected is because he doesn't turn his work into airbrushed posters---his rocks look real and his geology is "faultless" which spells his doom. Popular astronomicals look like they belong in a Woolworth's of 2050 AD.'

Brian Smith reports: "Here are the "winners" of the latest Elron Awards, presented at V-Con 5 for disservice to science fiction:

1. John Norman for MARAUDERS OF GOR and IMAGINITIVE SEX
2. OYSEY magazine
3. SPACE:1999. (However, I am not sure this is SF.)
4. The United States and the Soviet Union, for Apollo-Soyuz.
5. The British Columbia SF Association, for the rotten fiction written at meetings and subsequently published in the BCSPA 'zine.

In addition, Roger Elwood was elevated to the Elron Hall of Fame. The nominees included Laser books, the Laser book covers, the committee that oversold registrations to the New York Star Trek convention, and numerous, obscure others.'

W. Dennis Viets agreed with Alter that the Fabian FANTASTIC NUDES are worth \$8. He wonders, though... 'how many people noticed that Sharane from THE SHIP OF ISH-TAR (plate #3) was, curve for

curve, Karen Christy, PLAYBOY's Playmate for December, 1971? Take a look at the January '72 issue, PLAYBOY's Playmate Review section, page 187.'

There is no shame or guilt in being inspired by good figure photography. A model is a model is a model.

Buzz Dixon says: 'I am looking for information on BBC-TV's series, DR. WHO. In particular I'd like to see fanzine reviews, newspaper clippings, information and an address for the DR. WHO fan club, and an article or book entitled THE MAKING OF DR. WHO by Malcolm Hulke and Terrance Dicks. I am willing to pay reasonable prices for certain items but please write first.'

Buzz' address: 111-B Meyer Av.
NBU-51-0
Ft. Huachuca,
Arizona 85613
USA

Darrell Schweitzer, in the body of a letter dealing with a review column he starts for SFR next issue (possible title, "The Vivisector") wrote:

"Some news, told unto me by Robert Whitaker who got it over the phone from D. G. Hartwell--- SF EXPO was cancelled! Yuggoth, I'd expected the thing to be a flop, but... this? Allegedly notable like Sturgeon and Bertram Chandler got there and surprise! no con... They ended up doing lots of talking & giving parties for one another. Imagine all the suckers with tickets, who were not notified in time. This thing was advertised as far away as Australia. (Inside backcover of VOID 3 --- an issue which hath a story by me in it, by the way) I think we have the makings of a major scandal in this. Perhaps the NY legislature or Supreme Court or whatever will put aside investigating crooked STAR DREK cons and go for the choicer game.'

Yes, the cancellation was confirmed by Jim Baen when he called to order & discuss another "Alien Viewpoint" column for GALAXY. His understanding was that the SF EXPO has been put off until the Fall. I have no other details at this time.

Darrell, in a letter dated 6-18-76, comments:

"SFR #17 is one of the best issues yet. My initial reaction to seeing Robert Anton Wilson's name on the cover was "Who?" but

the interview made lively reading, even if I don't know the man's work. That's the sign of a good interviewing job. Congrats to Neal Wilgus.

"I've gotten a couple comments from established writers about the conscious/unconscious thing. Sprague de Camp thinks these aren't two types, but stages writers go through. The evidence supports him. The older, practiced writer usually has more control over what he's doing. That makes enough sense. Chip Delany says if we examine the mechanism of creativity too closely it may fall apart. Maybe he's right. There are some things Man Was Not Meant To Know...

'I might suggest to Ray Nelson that the Man-the-Puppet routine is only dull when taken for granted and not questioned. Much good fiction has been written about the puppet-man trying to cut the strings & get loose. The whole idea is not exactly new. Sophocles got some pretty good results that way. We know his characters cannot escape Fate or the whims of the gods, but the drama is in the trying. One can get the same effect in modern fiction as long as there is a struggle.'

Franklin J.C. Hiller disagrees with my opinion that Lovecraft died of cancer of the intestine "probably because of his bad diet" (SFR #14, page 6). He says: "Geis, that statement is nothing but rank, superstitious rot. No such dietary connection with cancer of the colon has ever been established."

Nor disestablished. I think that thirty or so years of excessive intake of coffee (which "uses up" the B-complex vitamins at a high rate) and excessive eating of sugar (which has the same effect on the body's store of B-vitamins) will result in some wild cell behavior as the body's reserves are depleted and kept at near-exhaustion levels. Lovecraft probably didn't get near enough vitamin C, either.

I think the man killed himself out of ignorance and lack of a basic self-interest. Of course, he was so poor most of his life he probably had to skimp on buying proper food, and ate too much starch and empty carbohydrates.

David B. Kirby informs:

'About a year ago I wrote you asking info on the group copyright you give your zine---all copyright reverting to the contributors. You were not really sure whether or not

this could be done, but suggested a phrase I might use. I finally got around to writing the copyright office about the first of this year and thought I would share with you what I found out.

'According to them, it is not legal to run a copyright on a magazine or book that automatically reverts to the authors. You could either copyright SFR in your name and issue a release to the authors each time they wanted to republish something or you could have each contribution copyrighted individually, with--of course--a fee paid on each contribution.

'It looks like this could run into a lot of paperwork for everyone concerned but I thought you might want to know the situation.'

Yes, thank you. I've revised my copyright statement on the contents page. It still isn't strictly legal, I suspect, but the intent is clear.

I want only the right to publish an item in SFR, and the right to reprint the issue for back issue sales. In the case of my continual use of Tim Kirk illos drawn especially for SFR (and Alter) I pay him a small royalty once a year.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE and ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE--obviously following the 'name' formula.) Isaac will direct editorial policy, contribute fiction and write short editorials. George Scithers (editor of the Hugo-winning AMRA) will assemble each issue, working with two other Philadelphia SF writers, Gardner Dozois and Sandy Meschkow.

For more information ask for the information sheet which details their fiction wants. The address is: Box 13116 Philadelphia, PA 19101

I have a three page, single-spaced letter from Michael Ward and no room to publish it. It is a Contrary Opinion to Donn Vicha's on Delany's TRITON. Next issue, Mike.

A RUNDOWN of the reader reaction to SFR 17 is in order---before I forget to do it.

Stephen Fabian's cover was well-liked, except what did it mean? I asked Steve to draw a fierce lovely woman of the future with a "museum" of period humans in the background. The idea being that she is one of a future people who collect samples of Earth history by time machine.

The interview with George R. R. Martin was approved. Several readers saying they thought George the best new writer on the scene. One reader said he was bored with the same old Q's and A's.

'Philip K. Dick: A Parallax View' by Terrence M. Green was liked, although one person said it wasn't 'deep' enough. Sorry, I don't go for DEEP analytical articles on the gut-theory that 99% of that type are dull, pretentious, and wrong!

The poem sent by a hoaxter in the name of R. A. Lafferty was given a chorus of high marks. Tsk. The real poet needn't 'hide' behind a famous name to get his/her work published.

R. Faraday Nelson's 'Microcosmos' was enthusiastically received. Two New York readers made the point that Ray must have meant New York city, not the entire state. They got trees and country there, too.

Everybody loved Jim McQuade's graphic strip, "The Altered Ego." More.

Neal Wilgus' interview with Robert Anton Wilson was found good, with one or two thinking RAW a crazy.

Freff's art review column, "Angel Fear" was generally approved, with a preference, next time, for more comment on specific prozine and pb covers.

Alter Ego got his big measure of praise and clamor for more and more of his opinions. I, too, was urged to write still more in these pages. *cough cough* Therefore it has been decided to follow the easy path and indeed hog the issue next time. Alter is even now cavorting in the dungeon and planning various clever killer reviews, while I am placidly counting the money I'll save by not buying outside reviews.

NEXT ISSUE will have a Tim Kirk cartoon cover, an interview with Kelly Freas by Freff (I don't have it in hand yet, but I trust...I believe...), a Darrell Schweitzer book review column, I hope a Freff art review column, I hope a George Warren column.... and probably something unexpected I can't refuse.

Yes, I meant to say something nasty about the postal service. They raised 2nd, 3rd and 4th class rates again July 6th, and are trial-ballooning talk of a 17¢ per ounce first class mail increase late this year or early next.

I find it astonishing that with inflation running at 'only' 5-6% so far this year, they need another 20-25% increase. Ah, deficits, thy father is the post office. At this rate of discouraging mail users with ever-higher rates, they'll end up with one thousand people a year mailing a letter each which will cost a thousand dollars for the stamp. And they'll have a trillion dollar deficit. (Which Congress will hardly notice, because by then the national debt will be at least a quadrillion and...but why go on.*sob*)

And, finally, thank you to all who wrote and expressed opinions, sent quotes for possible fillers, and who also sent articles, pages, etc. from sources which you thought would interest me. I simply can't respond to all the material and letters, but I do appreciate it, and truth-to-tell, have come to look forward to the day's interesting clips and bits and pieces from the readership. It is part of my continuing education. Thanks especially this time to Donn Vicha and John S. Kelly and John Boardman.

Till next time....I remain your disobedient servant. ---REG



There is a new sf prozine, name of ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE. That's a lot of title.

It'll be interesting to see how it's handled on the cover.

The zine will be published by Davis Publications, Inc. (They pub.

BACK ISSUES

THE ALIEN CRITIC SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

No other numbers are available
ONE DOLLAR PER COPY

EACH ISSUE CONTAINS MANY REVIEWS.
EACH ISSUE CONTAINS LETTERS FROM
WELL-KNOWN SF & FANTASY WRITERS,
EDITORS, PUBLISHERS AND FANS.

THE FOLLOWING LISTINGS ARE OF
FEATURED CONTRIBUTIONS

THE ALIEN CRITIC #5 Interview
with Fritz Leiber; "The Literary
Dreamers" by James Blish; "Irvin
Binkin Meets H. P. Lovecraft" by
Jack Chalker.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #6 Interview
with R. A. Lafferty; "The Tren-
chant Bludgeon" by Ted White;
"Translations From the Editorial" by
Marion Z. Bradley.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #7 "The Shape
of Science Fiction to Come" by Pre-
derik Pohl; "Noise Level" by John
Brunner; "Up Against the Wall, Rog-
er Zelazny", an interview.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #8 "Tomorrow's
Libido: "Sex and Science Fiction" by
Richard Delap; "The Trenchant Blud-
geon" by Ted White; "Banquet Speech"
by Robert Bloch; "Noise Level" by
John Brunner.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #9 "Reading
Heinlein Subjectively" by Alexei and
Cory Panshin; "Written To a Pulp!"
by Sam Merwin, Jr.; "Noise Level"
by John Brunner; "The Shaver Papers"
by Richard S. Shaver.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #10 An inter-
view With Stanislaw Lem; "A Nest of
Strange and Wonderful Birds" by Sam
Merwin, Jr.; Robert Bloch's Guest
of Honor Speech; The Heinlein Re-
action.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #11 An inter-
view With Avram Davidson; "The
Foundation on Sands" by John J. Al-
derson; "Footnotes to Fan History"
by Larry Shaw.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #12
"Smoke and Glass"--a non-fiction
fantasy about Harlan Ellison by
Richard Delap; "You Can't Say
THAT!" by Richard Lupoff; "Confes-
sions of a Wage Slave" by David
M. Harris; "Tuckered Out" by Barry
Malzberg; "Uffish Thots" by Ted
White.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #13 The
Elwood Controversy; "Visit To a
Pulpy Planet" by Milton F. Stev-
ens; "HARLAN ELLISON--Some After-

thoughts" by Harlan Ellison; "The
Gimlet Eye" by Jon Gustafson.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #14

An Interview With Philip Jose
Farmer; "Dancing On the Titanic"
by Charles W. Runyon; "Thoughts
on Logan's Run" by William F. No-
lan; "The Gimlet Eye" by Jon
Gustafson.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #15

"Spec Fic and the Perry Rhodan
Ghetto" by Donald C. Thompson; An
Interview With L. Sprague de Camp
by Darrell Schweitzer; "Uffish
Thots" by Ted White; "The Gimlet
Eye" by Jon Gustafson.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #16

An Interview with Jerry Pournelle;
"The True and Terrible History of
Science Fiction" by Barry Malzberg;
"Noise Level" by John Brunner;
"The Literary Masochist" by Richard
Lupoff; "Whatever Happened to Fay
Wray?" by Michael G. Coney; "The
Gimlet Eye" by Jon Gustafson;
"Plugged In" by George Warren.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #17

An
Interview with George R. R. Mart-
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